

**Grammar teaching concepts and practice in the task-based
secondary English curriculum of Hong Kong**

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Declaration

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

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Abstract

Grammar has often been a topic which receives attention in the English Language curricula of Hong Kong schools, irrespective of what teaching approaches are being endorsed. Particularly in the task-based English Language curriculum implemented in secondary schools from 2002, grammar is presented as one of the highlights.

This thesis aims to investigate how grammar teaching is perceived and practised within the task-based secondary curriculum of Hong Kong. The study covers three major areas of investigation: (a) language teaching policy and curriculum in Hong Kong; (b) language and grammar teaching materials; and (c) individual teachers' grammar teaching concepts and practice. The purpose is to explore the transmission of curriculum ideas and examine whether theory, policy and practice align in the process of curriculum implementation.

The first two areas were examined through literature review and materials analysis, to establish a context for interpreting the empirical data collected from lesson observations and interviews to investigate the third area of how grammar teaching was perceived and practised by individual teachers in their classrooms. Relationships among these three areas were examined in order to present a comprehensive picture of the concepts and practice concerning grammar teaching in Hong Kong secondary schools.

From the planned curriculum in the curriculum documents to the enacted curriculum in language classrooms, a chain of intricate relationships is involved regarding the connection of curriculum ideas to second language teaching theory and research, the transference of curriculum ideas to textbooks and grammar teaching materials, and the implementation of curriculum ideas in the language classrooms by individual teachers.

Results showed that curriculum ideas did not often transfer fully to teaching materials or apply to teaching practice as intended. There was evidence of interactions at different levels as participants in the curriculum implementation process engaged with and interpreted the curriculum ideas from their own perspectives of operationalising ideas in the intended curriculum. Through exploring these relationships, suggestions for grammar teaching within the secondary task-based curriculum have been proposed to inform future pedagogy, research and policy.

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Special terms and acronyms

AL1/BL1	Teacher A Lesson 1 / Teacher B Lesson 1
AL2/BL2	Teacher A Lesson 2 / Teacher B Lesson 2
AI1/BI2	Teacher A Interview 1 / Teacher B Interview 1
AI2/BI2	Teacher A Interview 2 / Teacher B Interview 2
CALL	Computer-assisted language learning
CDC	Curriculum Development Council
CLT	Communicative language teaching
CMC	Computer-mediated communication
CMI /EMI	Chinese medium of instruction / English medium of instruction
C-R	Consciousness-raising
EC	Education Commission
ECR	Education Commission Report
ED/EDB/EMB	Education Department (government body on education); re-named as Education and Manpower Bureau in 2000; re-named again as Education Bureau in 2007
EFL	English as a foreign language
ELT	English language teaching
ESL	English as a second language
HKCEE	Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination
HKDSE	Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education, a new public exam to be implemented in 2012 to replace the existing HKCEE
L1	First language
L2	Second language
LPAT	Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers
MOI	Medium of instruction

PCK	Pedagogical content knowledge
PPP	Presentation-Practice-Production
SBA	School-based Assessment
SCMP	South China Morning Post
SLA	Second language acquisition
TBL	Task-based learning
TBLT	Task-based language teaching
TLA	Teacher's language awareness
TMA	Teacher's metalinguistic awareness
TOC	Target-Oriented Curriculum
WELL	Web-based language learning

Chapter 1 Introduction

Hong Kong's new task-based curriculum was officially launched in the junior secondary curriculum in 2002. Although purportedly a new curriculum initiative, task-based teaching is nothing revolutionary in the Hong Kong secondary curriculum. The basic principles underlying the task-based curriculum are generally a continuation of those embedded in the previous curriculum (published in 1983) which endorsed the communicative language teaching approach. These major principles of the task-based approach were also exemplified in the short-lived Target-Oriented Curriculum, which was briefly implemented in primary schools in the late 1990s and discontinued a few years later.

Although the major principles of teaching and learning for the subject of English Language remain quite similar to those that have often been practised, one of the key features which stands out conspicuously in the 2002 curriculum is the overt attention it placed on the importance of grammar, an area where the previous communicative curriculum fell short of. It is this renewed attention to grammar that this study aims to investigate.

To redress the lack of contextualisation and integration in the previous research regarding grammar teaching and task-based language teaching (TBLT), this study attempts to explore the alignment of theory, policy and practice in the process of curriculum transmission and implementation in terms of how grammar teaching is perceived and practised within the task-based secondary curriculum of Hong Kong.

This thesis adopts the broad definition of task-based approach as used in the curriculum documents for the teaching of English Language in secondary schools in Hong Kong. The

concept of the task-based approach, as expounded in the new English Language syllabus, appears to be general and fundamental, as the description can be applied to a wide range of task-based teaching and learning situations: “The task-based approach aims at providing opportunities for learners to experiment with and explore both spoken and written language through learning activities which are designed to engage learners in the authentic, practical and functional use of language for meaningful purposes” (Curriculum Development Council, 1999, p.41). Further on in the syllabus, a learning task is more specifically described as something which has a purpose and a context, which involves learners in a mode of thinking and doing, drawing upon their own framework of knowledge, which will lead towards an end-product (Curriculum Development Council, 1999).

The task-based approach is also referred to as task-based language teaching (TBLT) in this thesis. It is different from the communicative approach mainly in the way that the concept of tasks is used as a principle of organising teaching and learning, which embodies the curriculum as well as teaching and learning activities. This idea is clearly endorsed in the English Language syllabus, which recommends applying the concepts of modules, units and tasks in organising teaching and learning: “A module is an organising focus, and usually contains a number of units which are thematically or conceptually related. These themes and concepts are explored through tasks” (Curriculum Development Council, 1999, p.44). This organisation principle closely resembles what Richards and Rodgers (2001) propose in their definition of task-based learning as “an approach based on the use of tasks as the core unit of planning and instruction in language teaching” (p.223).

With the paramount concern of task-based language teaching (TBLT) for meaningful communication, attention to grammar and language forms is often relegated to a

secondary position, as was the case under the preceding communicative approach. However, the new curriculum gives obvious emphasis to grammar and describes how to teach grammar quite specifically. In the English Language curriculum guide, a section is dedicated to the importance of grammar under “Task-based learning and teaching”, with the sub-heading “Learning grammar in context”. The relationship between TBLT and grammar teaching is referred to quite directly in the following description: “The task-based approach to language learning does not preclude the learning and teaching of grammar. Within this approach, grammar is seen as a means to an end rather than a body of knowledge to be learned for its own sake” (Curriculum Development Council, 2002, p.97).

The meaning of “learning grammar in context” has been expounded further in the curriculum guide. Grammar can be taught in a variety of different ways, making use of exercises or activities ranging from those consisting of discrete grammar items to those encouraging contextualised grammar practice. The teaching and learning of grammar can occur at different stages before, after, or during the accomplishment of tasks, instead of being restricted to the pre-task stage alone (Curriculum Development Council, 2002).

This description indicates that “learning grammar in context” is not in fact confined to “contextualised teaching of grammar”, which emphasises the teaching of grammar in meaningful contexts. Instead, the decontextualised teaching of grammar using discrete grammar exercises is also permitted at appropriate stages of the task-based learning process. There is an evident attempt in the curriculum documents to juggle the diverging demands of form and meaning, which is a key issue regarding the integration of grammar into TBLT.

In fact, this attention to grammar in the current curriculum represents not so much a

resurgence of interest, but rather an expansion of the developments in English language teaching in Hong Kong over the past decades. The urge to address the role of grammar teaching has never abated in educational policy or in society, as will be shown in the discussion in the next section.

This study examines the concepts and practice of how grammar teaching is implemented in the secondary English curriculum. Through the examination of curriculum ideas on grammar teaching and how they are transmitted to teaching materials and finally practised by individual teachers, it is hoped that a comprehensive picture can be compiled concerning the integration of grammar teaching into the task-based curriculum to better inform the practice of pedagogy in Hong Kong.

To contextualise the investigations of this study, the major developments in grammar teaching in Hong Kong are examined in the following section.

1.1 Major developments in grammar teaching in Hong Kong

In Hong Kong, developments in grammar teaching approaches have been very much influenced by major developments in second language teaching and learning theories. Although grammar has often received attention, there have been adjustments in the place of grammar instruction in the English Language curriculum in response to the changes in teaching approaches adopted by the curriculum. The syllabus of 1975 adopted the grammar translation method as the main English Language teaching approach, and grammar was therefore a major focus. In the 1983 curriculum, however, grammar was relegated to a much less important position, as the communicative language teaching approach took over the reins.

With the adoption of the new syllabus, form-focused instruction gave way to the communicative language teaching approach in the 1980s, which generated much discussion about falling standards and the problem of neglecting grammar. Although no conclusive evidence has been established, the falling standards of English in recent decades has often been attributed to the neglect of grammar instruction owing to the implementation of the communicative approach. Au (1998), for example, suggests that more grammar should be taught in schools to improve students' language standards, as training in the ground rules of grammar is important for second language learners of English.

Whether standards are really falling or if falling standards are the result of neglecting grammar, are positions which are hard to verify. However, it is evident that grammar instruction was largely neglected in the communicative classrooms in the 1970s and 1980s, as pointed out by Littlewood (1993):

It was almost as if, by mutual agreement of the teaching profession, grammar had ceased to exist. This impression was reinforced by much of the published material of the time. For example, in many of the textbooks which became popular in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the learning content is described entirely in terms of communicative functions. ... If they deal overtly with grammar at all, this is often hidden away as unobtrusively as possible. (p.6)

Supporters of the communicative approach have defended their case, stressing that the communicative approach has never intended to de-emphasise grammar; rather, it advocates the teaching of grammar in meaningful contexts. Littlewood (1993), for example, reaffirms the importance of grammar within the framework of a communicative approach. He stresses the important role that grammar plays in communication and suggests ways of helping learners internalise grammar. In a similar vein, Tsui (1993) makes a strong case for grammar to be taught and learnt purposefully to communicate

meaning. She emphasises the importance of good grammar instruction, which presents grammatical items and structures in relation to meaning and use, and encourages students to engage themselves in activities requiring the use of grammatical structures to communicate.

Harris (1993) goes even further to suggest that grammar teaching should form part of the language curriculum even at the primary level. He stresses the importance of teaching grammar at primary EFL classrooms in relation to meaningful contexts and pupils' needs. The distinction he draws between "covert" and "overt" teaching is similar to the commonly used distinction between "implicit" and "explicit" teaching of grammar. He suggests that the covert and overt approaches represent a continuum along which teaching activities can be placed.

Views concerning Hong Kong's falling English standard and the place of grammar in English language teaching have also reverberated in the press over the years, beginning in the early years when the communicative approach was first implemented. While some query the over-emphasis on grammar (*SCMP*, August 31 1995); others question the neglect of grammar in the communicative approach (*SCMP*, August 26 1997). Criticisms of the inadequacy of the education system and the call for reform in teaching methodology as an elixir in arresting falling standards have never abated (*SCMP*, August 31 1995; October 21 2002).

These ideas and developments have given rise to a renewed attention to grammar in the most recent curriculum. The approach of the contextualised teaching of grammar has been adopted as the official stance of the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) (the central education policy unit of Hong Kong, now renamed the Education Bureau (EDB)), towards grammar teaching in recent years, as stated in the Curriculum Development

Council (CDC) syllabuses and curriculum documents for the educational reform published from 1999 to 2002, which contain detailed descriptions of how grammar teaching can be implemented.

This emphasis on grammar as a teaching and learning strategy is reinforced by another policy towards improving teacher quality. From 2002 onwards, English teachers have been required to take the Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers (LPAT) (English Language) benchmark examination. Explicit explanations of grammatical structures feature in two out of the five papers that teachers are required to take: the Writing and the Speaking papers (Education and Manpower Bureau, 2000). This reinforces once more the government's intention to reinstate grammar as an important focus for the English Language curriculum.

This attention to grammar, however, does not seem to be reflected in other government policies towards English Language education. Most notably in the assessment areas, the curriculum policy seems to be moving away from grammar to focus more on language use. To reduce the pressure on students created by the secondary exit public examination and to reform the present language teaching approach, School-based Assessment (SBA) has been introduced as one component of the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE), the public examination all students must take at the end of their secondary education. The SBA is intended to be integrated into the normal day-to-day curriculum so that students do not need to cope with a high-stakes one-off examination just before they graduate. For this assessment, students are encouraged to do extensive reading and orally express their ideas on what they read. There are very few restrictions on the grammatical structures they need to acquire and need to be taught using traditional grammar exercises. Complementary to this initiative is the reform in the HKCEE exam papers. One of the most grammar-related papers, Paper II, has been abolished and

replaced by other papers which put more emphasis on expression and less on form. Negative comments about the lack of grammar and the failure of the paper to discriminate different proficiency levels were expressed in the press after its initial implementation (*SCMP*, May 5 2007).

The educational policies and reform initiatives are not consistent regarding the place of grammar in the curriculum. This may, as will be shown, impose conflicting demands on teachers who have to decide how to integrate grammar into the task-based curriculum.

A small number of studies have been conducted in recent years to explore the implementation of the task-based approach and grammar teaching in Hong Kong (Chan, 2006; Hui, 2004; Lee, 2002; Mai, 2003; Mak, 2004; Tong, 2005; Wu, 2006). However, grammar teaching and TBLT have often been investigated as two separate issues and little has yet been done to explore the relationship between the two in depth. Moreover, the exploration of teachers' concepts and practice is often not sufficiently contextualised in the wider educational or language teaching contexts underlying or shaping them. These research gaps will be addressed in this thesis.

1.2 Purpose and outline of research

This thesis aims to investigate how grammar teaching is perceived and practised within the secondary curriculum of Hong Kong, making sense of the conflicting ideas from the different contexts described above. The study covers three major areas. It first analyses curriculum ideas on grammar teaching in the curriculum documents, and traces the sources of these ideas in second language acquisition (SLA) research and theories. Related educational policies are also examined. Then it explores ways in which the curriculum ideas are interpreted and transmitted to textbooks and teaching materials. The

investigation of the first two areas is used to contextualise the exploration of how individual teachers perceive grammar teaching and practise it in their classrooms. Ideas in the three areas are then put together to see if there are possible connections or interrelationships, in order to gain a comprehensive picture of concepts and practices concerning grammar teaching in Hong Kong secondary schools, for informing future pedagogy, research and policy.

The following is the main research question addressed in this study:

How is grammar teaching perceived and practised within the task-based secondary curriculum in Hong Kong?

Related to the main research question are five subsidiary questions:

Background question

Question 1: What does recent theory and research say about the teaching of grammar?

Questions related to documentary analyses

Question 2: What do Hong Kong curriculum documents say about the teaching of grammar?

Question 3: To what extent do teaching materials reflect theoretical, research and curricular guidance?

Question related to teaching practice

Question 4: How do individual teachers in Hong Kong perceive and practice grammar teaching?

General question

Question 5: What do the answers to the above subsidiary questions suggest about grammar pedagogy within TBLT for the Hong Kong secondary English curriculum?

To capture the wide spectrum of perspectives across different sectors of the English language teaching discipline involved in the curriculum implementation of grammar teaching, multiple research methods are used in this study. The first three questions are answered in Chapters 1 to 4 through a literature review on second language teaching theory and research, and also analyses of curriculum documents, textbooks and grammar teaching materials. The last two questions are answered through a small-scale empirical study conducted to examine how individual teachers perceive and practice grammar teaching in their classrooms. The research design and findings of the empirical study are presented in Chapters 5 and 6.

The definition of “grammar” that this study adopts is one that is commonly used for language teaching and learning. As defined by Richards (2002), “grammar” is “a description of the structure of a language and the way in which linguistic units such as words and phrases are combined to produce sentences in the language. It usually takes into account the meanings and functions these sentences have in the overall system of the language.” (p. 230). It is more important for grammar at the secondary level to emphasise the use of structures in communicating meaning rather than on structural accuracy in areas which do not affect the meaning too much. The type of grammar referred to in this study is therefore more “functional” (Halliday, 1994) and “lexical” (Lewis, 1993) rather than purely structural. It is also a kind of pedagogical grammar which is different from other types of more theoretical grammar like linguistic or academic grammar, as its major

concern is for facilitating the teaching and learning of a language, especially a foreign or second language (Bygate, Tonkyn, & Williams, 1994; Odlin, 1994b; Rutherford & Sharwood-Smith, 1988).

It is not the purpose of this study to go deeply into individual teachers' cognitive processes. Rather, this study evolves around "perceptions", which mainly consist of teachers' pedagogical concepts in practising teaching within the task-based secondary English curriculum of Hong Kong, as well as their views concerning the teaching and learning environment. The teaching concepts of individual teachers are subject to the influence of wider concepts from research, theory and policy in English language teaching. They may also interact with pedagogical concepts underlying the curriculum and teaching materials. It is only through the investigation of both the wider and more specific teaching contexts that a comprehensive picture can be drawn of the concepts and practice of grammar teaching in the Hong Kong curriculum.

Two major types of data collection methods are used in this study. The first involves the use of literature review and materials analysis related to grammar teaching theory and research in SLA in general, or with specific reference to Hong Kong. These contribute to present the wider contexts of research, theory and policy for exploring how grammar teaching can be practised within TBLT. The second type of data consists of a small-scale empirical study on how grammar is perceived and practised by individual teachers. For this purpose, lesson observations and interviews were conducted with individual teachers. These different sets of data were then compared to discover any convergence or divergence in providing a comprehensive picture of the issue under investigation.

This thesis consists of a total of eight chapters. It starts with this introductory chapter, which presents background issues and sets out the major focuses for the investigation, as

well as providing a brief overview of the thesis. Chapter 2 discusses the theory and research of grammar teaching in second language education. Chapter 3 reviews the literature on curriculum implementation and examines the local educational developments, which provides a context for teachers' implementation of grammar teaching. Chapter 4 explores the transmission of curriculum ideas to the teaching materials. Chapter 5 presents the research design and methodology for data collection for the empirical study, taking into consideration the initial results of a pilot study. Chapter 6 presents and analyses the data from the empirical study on individual teachers' grammar teaching concepts and practice in Hong Kong. Chapter 7 puts the ideas and data from the teaching contexts and the empirical study together in a comprehensive discussion of grammar teaching in Hong Kong. The last chapter draws a conclusion about the value of the present study and discusses the implications of the findings for grammar teaching in the Hong Kong secondary curriculum.

Chapter 2 Grammar teaching in second language acquisition

2.1 Introduction

The acquisition of grammar has often been a controversial topic in the research of second language acquisition, as is the topic of grammar instruction. A great deal of research has been conducted over a long period of time on how grammar is acquired, how grammar should be taught or whether grammar should be explicitly taught at all. Although contentious views concerning the above issues have never abated, there has been a clear influence of the dominating teaching methodology on the way that debates on the issues of grammar are directed. These teaching methodologies and their relationship to grammar will be discussed in this chapter.

With the domination of the Grammar-Translation methodology in foreign language teaching for nearly a century from the 1840s to the 1940s (Richards & Rodgers, 2001), the position of formal instruction, that is, the teaching of language forms, was for a long time firmly established. It was only when other language teaching approaches emerged which de-emphasised grammar that the importance of formal instruction started to wane. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Direct Method, which stressed the ability to use rather than to analyse as the goal of language instruction, began to function as a viable alternative to Grammar-Translation (Celce-Murcia, 2001).

Language teaching approaches developed thereafter did not put too much emphasis on grammar either. The 1950s and 1960s saw the emergence of the Audiolingual Method and the Situational Method. During the same period, other methods attracted smaller but equally enthusiastic followers, including the Silent Way, Natural Approach, and Total Physical Response (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The Communicative Approach, which

became quite widely practised in the 1970s and 1980s, stressed the importance of meaningful communication, thereby further relegating attention to language forms to a secondary position. The Task-based Approach, which started to become popular from the 1990s, drew on the basic principles of its predecessor and continued to emphasise the importance of meaning over form. However, the pendulum had swung so far in favour of meaning that researchers and practitioners started to reflect on the wisdom of neglecting form. Starting from the 1990s, renewed interest in formal instruction emerged. A number of studies have been conducted, not only to justify the explicit teaching of grammar, but also to explore various ways of implementing form-focused instruction or achieving a focus on form.

2.2 Can grammar be explicitly taught?

The controversy over formal instruction started with different views held by two opposing camps concerning whether the teaching of grammar is beneficial to second language teaching and learning. Some researchers believed that formal instruction can facilitate acquisition in some way while others considered exposure to appropriate language input to be most essential. Krashen (1985), for example, expounded on the importance of language input making use of the Input Hypothesis. The Input Hypothesis claims that humans acquire language in only one way - by understanding messages, or by receiving “comprehensible input”. Krashen made a distinction between the conscious process of “acquisition” and the subconscious process of “learning”. To him, the principal goal of language teaching is to supply comprehensible input in order to facilitate “acquisition”. He argues that formal instruction is of limited value because it can only contribute to “learning” and never to “acquisition”, although it can enable the learner to monitor their own language. Moreover, only a limited subset of the simple rules of a language are “learnable”. Complex rules such as wh-questions (i.e. questions which start

with “who”, “which”, and “what”) or negatives (e.g. “do not”, “did not”, “had not”) cannot be learnt by most students. Krashen’s views have subsequently been disputed by many other later researchers. Further discussion on the learnability of simple and complex rules is presented in section 2.3.1 of this chapter.

There was a substantial amount of research on the effect of formal instruction on L2 acquisition in the 1970s and 1980s. Long (1983) reviewed a total of eleven studies that examine the effect of formal instruction on the rate/success of second language acquisition. Six of these studies showed that instruction helps, two produced ambiguous results, while the other three showed that instruction does not help, although each of these contained some hints of an advantage for instruction. These studies involved comparisons between learners receiving instruction and learners who experience exposure with or without instruction. Based on this review, Long (1983) drew the conclusion that there is considerable evidence to indicate that formal language instruction does make a difference. It appears to be especially useful in the early stages of second language acquisition (SLA) and in acquisition-poor environments.

In addition to the studies reviewed by Long, a number of other studies were also conducted which showed similar results, while some provided new insights. The study conducted by Spada (1986) went beyond a comparison of the effects of instruction with the effects of exposure to examine whether there was any interaction between the type of informal contact with the target language outside the classroom and the type of instruction. Her investigation of the effects of instruction and exposure in 48 adult learners enrolled in an intensive six-week English-as-a-second-language (ESL) course in Canada showed that contact was a less powerful predictor of differences in learners’ L2 abilities than instruction. Besides that, Spada also found that the type of instruction interacted with the amount of contact individual learners experienced. She drew the

conclusion that where grammar and literacy were concerned, direct intervention in form-focused instruction worked better than indirect intervention which was less form-focused. The implication of this study is that learners require both formal instruction and informal exposure and that the two together work better than either on its own.

Ellis (1990) also reviewed a number of studies on the effect of instruction on the process of L2 acquisition. These studies have sought to establish the effects of instruction in two ways: (1) by comparing classroom and naturalistic acquisition; (2) by means of classroom experiments designed to ascertain whether teaching specific items results in their acquisition. Research that falls into the first category focused on a number of “process” features: L2 errors, the sequence of acquisition of grammatical morphemes and the sequence of development of syntactical structures such as relative clauses and word order. Experimental studies in the second category fall into three groups: (1) accuracy studies which measure the effects of instruction by investigating whether there are any gains in the accuracy with which specific structures are performed after the treatment; (2) sequence of acquisition studies which examine whether formal instruction can influence the natural sequence for the acquisition of grammatical rules; and (3) “projection” studies which examine whether instruction can activate the “projection device” which enables the acquisition of one rule to trigger the acquisition of all the other rules that cluster with it. On the basis of his review, Ellis (1990) claims that there are grounds for believing that form-focused instruction does help the acquisition of linguistic competence. In some cases, depending on the nature of the target structure and when the intervention takes place, instruction can have an immediate effect. In other cases formal instruction may have a delayed effect, by providing the learner with more or less explicit grammatical concepts, which will later help the learner to attend to these features in the input and so acquire them procedurally.

We should, however, treat the results drawn from these studies with caution. As Ellis (1990) suggested, the research which they studied was psycholinguistic in nature. It has been quantitative and, in many instances, experimental. The studies on the effects of formal instruction have been product- rather than process-oriented. One result of this product-orientation is that “formal instruction” is treated as an undifferentiated phenomenon. It is not clear what kind of formal instruction was being practised in the studies and whether there was any consistency in the intensiveness of the attention to form.

Later research on formal instruction has attempted to address this gap. Instead of dwelling on the issue of whether formal instruction really helps, mainly through statistical measurements of proficiency gains after formal instruction, studies have diverged into different aspects of how formal instruction can be practised, from both linguistic and cognitive perspectives. Issues like the explicit versus the implicit teaching of grammar, attention to input versus attention to output, and how to draw attention to language forms will be examined in the following sections.

2.3 How should grammar be taught?

2.3.1 Explicit versus implicit teaching of grammar

The explicit teaching of grammar is a concept fundamental to the history of grammar teaching. Grammar teaching without qualification is often taken as a kind of explicit teaching, especially in earlier research where the focus is on whether grammar instruction contributes to the acquisition of grammar. More recent studies in the 1990s go into more depth about the issues of whether grammar should be taught explicitly or implicitly, or

deductively or inductively, or whether declarative or procedural knowledge should be given more emphasis.

The relationship between the explicit knowledge of grammar and implicit knowledge of grammar has been explored in a number of studies. The concept of “explicit versus implicit learning” is often associated with “deductive versus inductive learning”. According to DeKeyser (1995), these two pairs of words are related. Explicit learning occurs with concurrent awareness of what is being learnt; implicit learning occurs without concurrent awareness of what is being learnt. Explicit learning is closely related to the concept of deductive learning, which means that “rules are presented before examples are encountered” (p.380). Implicit learning, on the other hand, is often associated with the concept of inductive learning, which means that “examples are encountered before rules are inferred” (p. 380). Explicit and implicit learning are also related to the concept of declarative and procedural knowledge, as stated in Ellis (1990): “Explicit knowledge is conscious and declarative. Implicit knowledge is subconscious and procedural, although not necessarily fully automatic” (p.184).

A small number of researchers like Krashen (1985) believe that it is “acquired” (implicit) knowledge which contributes to communication. Implicit knowledge can only be acquired through exposure to comprehensible input. Formal instruction and the development of explicit knowledge has limited use in language acquisition.

Quite a number of studies conducted on the topic of explicit versus implicit or deductive versus inductive learning have disputed this position, showing that explicit learning is beneficial in some ways. The study conducted by DeKeyser (1995) lends support to the view that explicit-deductive learning is favourable for the learning of simple rules but more complex rules are better handled by implicit-inductive learning. The results of his

study are partially supported by another study (Robinson, 1996), which shows that explicit learning is favourable for learning simple rules, although implicit learning is not obviously superior in learning complex rules.

Another study by DeKeyser (1997) investigates the automatisisation of explicitly learned rules of morphosyntax in second language acquisition. Results show that the learning of second language grammar rules can proceed very much in the same way as learning in other cognitive domains. Therefore, systemic practice of specific rules for specific skills is beneficial in the second language curriculum.

Some studies have explored different ways of explicit teaching such as deductive and inductive teaching. As described by Ellis (2006), in deductive teaching, “a grammatical structure is presented initially and then practised in one way or another”, while in inductive teaching “learners are first exposed to exemplars of the grammatical structure and are then asked to arrive at a metalinguistic generalisation on their own” (p.97).

A number of studies have examined the relative effectiveness of the deductive and inductive approaches. Erlam (2003), for example, investigated the relative effects of deductive and inductive instruction on the acquisition of direct object pronouns in French. The participants of the study were three classes of secondary students. They were given three different types of instructional treatment: the deductive group received explicit instruction on direct object pronouns; the inductive group were asked to do practice activities without receiving any rule explanation or explicit metalinguistic information; the control group were given no exposure to the target structure outside the testing episodes. A comparison of the pre-test and post-test scores provided evidence in support of the superiority of deductive instruction over inductive instruction. The scores also indicated that the inductive group performed better for measures of language production

that assessed the morphological rather than the syntactical features of the target structure. This suggests that inductive instruction is more likely to facilitate the learning of morphological rather than syntactical aspects of language.

Studies on explicit or implicit learning/knowledge of grammar in recent years have explored how these two complement or influence each other. N. C. Ellis (2005) reviewed various psychological and neurobiological processes by which explicit knowledge of form-meaning associations impacts upon implicit language learning. He suggests that implicit and explicit knowledge can be both dissociable and cooperative. A number of researchers have considered implicit and explicit language knowledge to be separable, with some reviews concentrating on the contributions of implicit learning to SLA (N. C. Ellis, 2002a; Krashen, 1985, 1994) and others concentrating on those of explicit learning to SLA (N. C. Ellis, 1995a; Lightbown et al., 1993; Long, 1991; Schmidt, 1993). However, applied linguistic analyses have also suggested that there is some kind of interface between explicit and implicit learning, even if only a weak one (Doughty & Williams, 1998; R. Ellis, 1994, 2001; Long, 1991; Norris & Ortega, 2000; Spada, 1997).

Gasparini (2004) considers the value of implicit learning in education. Based on his review of previous research, which supports the possibility of re-directing implicit learning by some kind of formal instruction/explicit learning, Gasparini (2004) argues for the validity of constructivist models in which the implicit dimension of learning constitutes the initial step of a valid educational approach in second language (L2) learning/teaching, such as the pedagogical model of task-based learning, which systematically tries to exploit the implicit learning dimension to boost the construction of effective L2 learning environments. Gasparini believes implicit learning can be applied in other educational disciplines as well.

Ellis (2006) suggests that although there is plentiful evidence that explicit instruction is effective in promoting second language learning, no published study has directly tested or shown whether explicit knowledge converts directly into implicit knowledge or simply facilitates its development. Many aspects concerning the connection between the two are still largely indeterminate, indicating the need for further research to establish a clear relationship.

2.3.2 Input-oriented versus output-oriented approaches

Research has also been conducted on the topic of input versus output, such as whether attention to form in relation to language input or language output should be emphasised more. In his discussion on the relationship between classroom interaction and language learning, where both input and output can play an important role, Ellis (1990) makes a distinction between reception-based theories and production-based theories. Reception-based theories of L2 acquisition emphasise the importance of input, as opposed to learner output. One early supporter of the reception-based theories is Krashen (1985), who puts forward the Input Hypothesis. According to his theory, the “comprehensible input” that the learner is exposed to is the most important ingredient for language acquisition. He suggests that learners develop their L2 competence by “understanding input that contains structures a little beyond their current knowledge” (p. 2). Other researchers, however, contend that the input a learner receives does not necessarily become a part of his knowledge of the language at his disposal. Drawing on the early distinction between “input” and “intake” made by Corder (1967), some researchers believe that comprehension is only possible when “input” is turned into “intake” (Gass & Selinker, 1994). Input is the language that a learner is exposed to. Intake is described by Gass and Selinker (1994) as “the process of assimilating linguistic material” (p. 302). It is only when input becomes intake that the latter becomes a part of a

learner's knowledge at his disposal, ready to engage in communication.

As acquisition depends on whether input can become intake, it is clear that input processing must play some role in the formation and development of the learner's linguistic system. For input to become intake, effort needs to be put on the former so that attention can be focused on the language structures. A number of studies have been conducted on the effectiveness of processing or enhancing the input such as those conducted by VanPatten (1990; 1993a; 1996). White, Spada, Lightbrown and Ranta (1991) also investigated the extent to which form-focused instruction and corrective feedback, which they referred to as "input enhancement" provided within a primarily communicative language programme (for French speakers learning English as a second language) would contribute to learners' accuracy in question formation. Results indicate that the instruction contributed to syntactic accuracy, and that learners exposed to input enhancement activities significantly outperformed the control groups.

Another experimental study Takimoto (2008) conducted on 60 Japanese learners of English investigated the effects of various kinds of input-based form-focused instruction on learners' ability to comprehend and produce polite requests in English, involving different types of deductive and inductive instruction, ranging from teacher-fronted explicit explanation of forms to structured input tasks and problem-solving task. The results indicate that the three treatment groups performed significantly better than the control group, suggesting that in this study explicit input-based instruction was effective both deductively and inductively for learners' comprehension and production of English polite requests. There was also some indication that inductive treatment may be superior in the longer term, as the inductive tasks provide learners with opportunities to engage with the target features meaningfully. This implies that effective learning occurs when the

tasks provide learners with opportunities to process both the form and the meaning of the target forms.

In addition to input processing, other research has explored the processing of output for facilitating the change of input into intake. A distinction can therefore be made between input-based and output-based theories, or what some researchers like Ellis (1990) term “reception-based theories” and “production-based theories”. The attention to the importance of intake has resulted in the emergence of theories which move gradually from the reception side to the production side. Long (1983) proposes the Interaction Hypothesis, according to which input is made comprehensible as a result of modification to the interactional structure of conversations when communication problems arise. Such a kind of modification is a result of what has become commonly known as “negotiation of meaning”, which refers to “those instances in conversation when participants need to interrupt the flow of the conversation in order for both parties to understand what the conversation is about” (Gass & Selinker, 1994, p. 208).

In a similar vein, further research has been conducted with a focus on the production process of language learning. Swain (1985), for example, puts forward the Output Hypothesis which claims that learners need the opportunity to produce language in order to develop native-speaker levels of grammatical proficiency. Swain describes the language they produce as “comprehensible output”, which refers to the need for learners to be “pushed toward the delivery of a message that is not only conveyed, but that is conveyed precisely, coherently and appropriately” (p.249).

Some of the more recent studies have focused on investigating the relative effectiveness of processing the input or the output. The study by Izumi and Izumi (2004) investigated whether giving learners an opportunity for oral output has any positive effect on the L2

learners' acquisition of a grammatical form. The results indicated that, contrary to their expectations, the output group, which engaged in a picture description task that involved input comprehension and output production, failed to out-perform the non-output group, which engaged in a picture sequencing task that required input comprehension only. Surprisingly, it was the non-output group that showed greater overall gains in learning. Izumi and Izumi (2004) put forward a plausible explanation in relation to the cognitive processes involved as the two groups of learners engaged in their respective task. They believed that the output task might have failed to engage the genuine production mechanisms. Instead, it might have served just as a mechanical production drill for learners, which resulted in little substantial impact on language development. The results of this study suggest that using output to facilitate grammatical acquisition can be successful only if genuine syntactic processing is engaged. This is possible if learners attend to crucial form-meaning relationships in meaningful production, instead of simply memorising and repeating the presented input. This has implications for task design in output-oriented activities.

The study by Qin (2008) aimed to compare processing instruction (PI) (VanPatten, 1993, 1996, 2000), an input-based focus-on-form technique, to dictogloss tasks (DG), an output-oriented focus-on-form type of instruction to assess their effects in helping beginning-EFL learners acquire the simple English passive voice. Results showed that the PI group performed significantly better than the DG group in comprehension, and as well as the DG group in production on the immediate post-test. One month later, the two groups' performances were similar in terms of both comprehension and production on the delayed post-test. Both groups improved significantly from the pre-test to the two post-tests in comprehension and production. One reasonable pedagogical implication is that both PI and DG are effective pedagogical tools to help beginning-EFL learners to acquire target grammatical forms.

Whether input or output should receive attention, or whether both are needed is still a matter of controversy. No clear conclusive result has been evident from the research conducted. These input-based and output-based perspectives often involve complex cognitive processes for which few research studies to date have investigated comprehensively. Some recent researchers even regard this comparison of the relative effectiveness of input-based or output-based instruction as unnecessary. As suggested by Ellis (2006), “It may be that, in classrooms, this comparison is ultimately meaningless because, in practice, both options are likely to involve input-processing and production” (p.99). What matters most is the engagement with both form and meaning in processing the input and the output. This can often be successfully achieved through task design and implementation.

2.3.3 Noticing and consciousness-raising

Going more deeply into the cognitive aspects of form-focused instruction, whether in the processing of language input or language output, the concepts of “noticing” and “consciousness-raising” have received a great deal of attention in recent research. The term “consciousness-raising” as defined by its early proponents, Rutherford and Sharwood Smith (1985), refers to “the deliberate attempt to draw the learner’s attention specifically to the formal properties of the target language” (p.274). The concepts of noticing or consciousness-raising have their origins in the learning theories of cognitive psychology and psycholinguistics. The cognitive theory of L2 learning developed by Bialystok (1988), has provided a framework for positioning the role of conscious knowledge in second language acquisition. Bialystok (1988) affirms the principle that language is processed by the human mind in the same way as other kinds of information. Language proficiency is described with reference to two dimensions: an analysed factor and an automatic factor. The analysed factor concerns the extent to which the language

learner is aware of the structure of his/her linguistic knowledge. Although Bialystok stressed that the degree of analyticity is not linked to consciousness and is not explicitly represented in the mind of the learner, she believed that analysed knowledge does make “articulated knowledge” and metalingual knowledge possible. Its real significance lies in the fact that it can be operated on by the learner and so is available for language uses of the kind required in formal instruction.

In fact, the concept of consciousness-raising is nothing original. It is built on Krashen’s (1985) concept of the Input Hypothesis and the subsequent theorising and studies on input and output processing. Schmidt (1990), an early proponent of the concept of noticing, suggests that not all input has equal value for a learner; only the input which is noticed will become available for intake and effective processing. He also discusses three other influences on individual differences in processing input: ability, readiness and task demands.

The studies conducted on the effectiveness of processing or enhancing input such as those by VanPatten (1990; 1993a; 1996) were in fact also studies on consciousness-raising, as they proposed that it is through input processing, that is, drawing attention to form in the language input, that input can be converted into intake to facilitate language acquisition. One of the early studies on grammatical consciousness-raising was conducted by VanPatten (1990) to explore the question of whether or not learners can consciously attend to both form and meaning when processing input. Learners of three levels participated in an experiment which involved processing information under four different conditions: attention to meaning alone; simultaneous attention to meaning and an important lexical item; simultaneous attention to meaning and a grammatical function; and simultaneous attention to meaning and a verb form. Results suggest that learners, in particular early-stage learners, have great difficulty attending to both form and content.

As conscious attention to form in the input competes with conscious attention to meaning, it is only when input is easily understood that learners can attend to form as part of the intake process.

A number of studies were conducted in the early 1990s using a task-based approach for achieving grammatical consciousness-raising (Fotos, 1993, 1994; Fotos & Ellis, 1991). From the 1990s to the 2000s, the concept of grammatical consciousness-raising received increasing attention in TBLT as an important means of focusing on form. The type of grammatical consciousness-raising tasks proposed by Fotos and Ellis are a little different from the consciousness-raising tasks proposed by previous researchers, as grammatical structures are not really taken as the means of communication as in most communicative tasks; they are actually the content of communication itself (Fotos & Ellis, 1991).

The study by Fotos and Ellis (1991) adopts a task-based approach for grammatical consciousness-raising. The effectiveness of using grammar tasks was compared to teacher-fronted grammar lessons in terms of the acquisition of grammatical knowledge and the production of negotiation of meaning in classroom interaction. Results suggest that the grammar task encouraged communication about grammar and enabled EFL learners to increase their knowledge of a difficult L2 rule.

As a follow-up to the previous study in 1991, Fotos (1993) conducted another study to investigate the amount of learner noticing produced by two types of grammatical consciousness-raising treatments designed to develop formal knowledge of problematical grammar structures: teacher-fronted grammar lessons and interactive, grammatical problem-solving tasks. The results indicate that task performance is as effective as formal instruction in the promotion of significant amounts of noticing. It is demonstrated that a number of learners who develop knowledge about grammatical structures subsequently

go on to notice those structures in communicative input subsequently after their consciousness had been raised.

In a similar vein, another study by Fotos (1994) investigates the effectiveness of grammatical consciousness-raising tasks which combine the development of formal knowledge about a problematic L2 grammatical feature with the provision for meaning-focused use of the target language. Three grammatical consciousness-raising tasks dealing with word order were investigated. The results indicate that the tasks successfully promoted both proficiency gains and L2 negotiated interaction in the participants. This suggests that grammatical consciousness-raising tasks can be recommended as one way to integrate formal instruction into a communicative framework.

In another discussion, Ellis (1995) examines an approach to grammar teaching which is based on interpreting input. His approach emphasises helping learners to notice grammatical features in the input, comprehend their meanings, and compare the forms present in the input with those occurring in learner output. Although not experimental in nature, this article offers useful ideas as well as examples of tasks designed for this teaching approach.

Leow (2001) makes a succinct summary of research in the 1990s which aims at drawing learners' attention to targeted linguistic forms in the L2 data or input. He reviews a variety of strands of research that have been conducted, including input flooding, input enhancement, implicit/explicit learning conditions, processing instruction, explicit/implicit feedback, and classroom-based tasks. Very often, the theoretical premise underlying these studies was that some form of attention (and awareness) to linguistic data is crucial for L2 learning to take place, but they failed to address the premise

methodologically. His study (Leow, 2001) was an attempt to fill this gap. In this study, he investigates the role of awareness and its potential effect on learners' immediate behaviour on both a recognition and written production task, addressing the research question: How do different levels of awareness of morphological forms in a problem-solving task influence learners' mental representations and subsequent recognition and accurate written production of such forms? His empirical investigations sought to first establish methodologically that attention was indeed paid to targeted forms in the input before the effects of such attention, and consequently awareness could be statistically analysed. The findings of this study provide empirical support for the facilitative effects of awareness in foreign language acquisition behaviour.

Other researchers have tried to explore the types of consciousness-raising tasks suitable for task-based teaching. Thornbury (1997), for example, proposes to fit the reformulation and reconstruction tasks into a task-based model of instruction for focusing learners' attention on form, exploiting both the meaning-driven and form-focused potential of both task types. He believes that the potential for these two commonly used task types for focusing learners' attention on form has received little attention. In a reformulation task, the teacher reformulates the text produced by the learner based on its content, but recasts it to provide a language model to be compared with the learner's original draft. In a reconstruction task, the learner reads a text provided by the teacher and then reconstructs it using his or her own language for matching with the original. In concluding his discussion, Thornbury suggests that tasks involving reformulation and reconstruction allow for consciousness-raising at a whole range of discourse, syntactic, lexical and phonological levels.

This attempt to integrate formal instruction into a communicative framework was taken further in the 1990s and 2000s, when researchers explored various ways of integrating

formal instruction into communicative language teaching and task-based language teaching. Further exploration of the concept of consciousness-raising has also been put forward by Ellis (2003), who describes consciousness-raising tasks as one kind of focused task for inducing an attention to form. He elaborates on the differences between consciousness-raising tasks and two other types of focused tasks: structure-based production tasks and comprehension tasks. First, while the other types of focused tasks are intended to cater primarily to implicit learning, consciousness-raising tasks are designed to cater primarily to explicit learning. Second, while the other types of tasks are built around the content of a general nature, consciousness-raising tasks make language itself the content. To conclude his discussion on this topic, Ellis reiterates that “communication” is still the primary focus of TBLT: “the value of C-R tasks lies not just in whether they are effective in developing explicit knowledge and subsequently promoting noticing but also in the opportunities they provide for learners to communicate” (p.166). Drawing on a comment he made previously, he emphasises again that “consciousness-raising is not an alternative to communication activities, but a supplement” (Ellis, 1991, as cited in Ellis, 2003, p.167).

Research interest in the exploration of the relationship between grammar teaching and task-based language teaching has continued unabated in the recent decade. This intricate relationship between form and meaning will be investigated further in the next section.

2.4 Grammar teaching and task-based language teaching

The more recent research on formal instruction has gone beyond the argument of whether formal instruction is beneficial for second language acquisition. By the 1990s and 2000s, there seemed to be some agreement among the researchers that formal instruction is beneficial in some way. The research focus therefore shifted to how a focus on form can

be induced through different strategies and how it can be integrated into the commonly-practised second language teaching approaches, namely, communicative language teaching (CLT) and task-based language teaching (TBLT).

For many years, the CLT approach, predecessor of TBLT, has dominated the scene of L2 acquisition. It is often believed that meaningful communicative interaction in the classroom facilitates language learning. CLT is often considered as a reaction against the more structural-based language teaching approaches like the grammar-translation and oral structural approaches which were previously popular before it. With its paramount concern for meaning, it is naturally not in favour of attending to form. For some time, the language teaching and learning scene relished the liberty of using language for the chief goal of communication, giving up the constraints of structural accuracy in favour of fluency. However, in the 1990s, there re-emerged a concern for the neglect of grammar in the communicative approach and its impact on learners' ability to produce accurate language.

CLT or the communicative approach, put communication at the centre of learning (Littlewood, 1981). The task-based approach, or TBLT, developed out of CLT, and has become quite a widely practised L2 teaching approach in the past two decades. In fact, CLT and TBLT are often referred to as two closely related or similar teaching approaches with similar pedagogy, although CLT is a little broader and more general as a description of a language teaching approach. The rationale behind the communicative approach and the task-based approach is basically similar. Both approaches emphasise the communication of meaning. The only major difference is that the latter relies on the explicit use of tasks for organising learning, as is suggested by Richards and Rodgers (2001), who define the task-based approach as “an approach based on the use of tasks as the core unit of planning and instruction in language teaching” (p.223).

The tasks within the task-based approach are the means through which learners can make use of authentic language they use in the real world for meaningful communication. The basic principles underlying CLT and TBLT somehow merge in the concept of “communicative tasks”, which is considered as the major language outcome that TBLT aims to achieve. As suggested by Doughty and Williams (1998), while carrying out communicative tasks, learners will receive comprehensible input and modified output. These processes are central to second language acquisition and will ultimately lead to the development of both linguistic and communicative competence. Richards (1999) also believes that successful language learning hinges on the immersion of students in tasks that require them to negotiate meaning and engage in naturalistic and meaningful communication. This concept is often found at the heart of much current communicative or task-based materials, such as “discussion-based materials, communication games, simulations, role plays and other group or pair-work activities” (p.5).

As suggested by Nunan (1989), the communicative task is “a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form” (p.10). Other researchers also reiterate the connection between the communicative task and meaning, and its dissociation from form. Crookes & Gass (1993), for example, describe communicative tasks as “devices to allow learners to practice using the language as a tool of communication rather than as a device to get learners to focus on grammatical features of the language” (p.124).

In fact, the relationship between grammar and CLT is not very different from that between grammar and TBLT. Both of these approaches do not seem to strongly endorse the importance of grammar at the outset. The recent resurgence of interest in grammar

teaching has prompted some researchers to explore how grammar should be positioned within CLT or TBLT. This will be discussed in the following section.

2.4.1 How grammar relates to TBLT

Examining the ways that researchers define a “task” can shed light on the relationship between grammar and TBLT. Many researchers have tried to give their own definitions of a task for their different theoretical emphases. For the purpose of the investigations in this thesis, the definition developed by Ellis (2003) is adopted. The definition was developed after Ellis consolidated various views in task-based research and pedagogy (as in Breen, 1989; Long, 1985; Richards, Platt, and Weber, 1985; Crookes, 1986; Prabhu, 1987; Nunan, 1989; Skehan, 1996; Lee, 2000; Bygate, Skehan and Swain, 2001). Ellis’ (2003) definition is presented below:

A task is a workplan that requires learners to process language pragmatically in order to achieve an outcome that can be evaluated in terms of whether the correct or appropriate propositional content has been conveyed. To this end, it requires them to give primary attention to meaning and to make use of their own linguistic resources, although the design of the task may predispose them to choose particular forms. A task is intended to result in language use that bears a resemblance, direct or indirect, to the way language is used in the real world. Like other language activities, a task can engage productive or receptive, and oral or written skills, and also various cognitive processes. (p.16)

This definition proposed by Ellis embodies the six criterial features of a task he describes:

1. A task is a workplan.
2. A task involves a primary focus on meaning.
3. A task involves real-world processes of language use.
4. A task can involve any of the four language skills.
5. A task engages cognitive processes.

6. A task has a clearly defined communicative outcome.

(Ellis, 2003)

The emphases on meaning, real-world language use, engagement of cognitive processes and the involvement of the four language skills are the same as those commonly endorsed by CLT. That a task is a workplan and has a clearly-defined communicative outcome is the newly-added emphasis for the task-based approach, which positions the task as the principle for organising teaching.

Like its predecessor, the communicative language teaching approach, the paramount concern for TBLT is the communication of meaning. Subsequent to this concern is the idea that the attention to language forms should be relegated to a position of secondary importance. This precedence of meaning over form is expressed by researchers like Willis (1996), who suggests that learners in task-based learning (TBL) are free to choose whatever language forms they wish to use to convey what they mean in order to fulfill the task goals as well as they can. Therefore, “it would defeat the purpose to dictate or control the language forms that they must use” (p.24). It seems that “meaning” and “form” are two inherently incompatible concepts in the communicative and task-based approach.

However, Ellis (2003) adds a further qualification to his definition of a task which somehow contradicts Willis’ (1996) idea that TBL learners are free to choose whatever language forms they wish to convey what they mean. He suggests that the liberty of the learners to make use of their own linguistic resources is qualified by the condition that “the design of the task may predispose them to choose particular forms” (Ellis, 2003, p.16). This position gives a new aspect to the relationship between form and meaning in TBLT, as it enhances the importance of form in TBLT.

In fact, communicative tasks only provide opportunities for learners to practise using the language for communication. They do not automatically produce learners who can make appropriate use of the language to attain the intended outcomes. The ability to achieve “fluency, accuracy and complexity” in using the language to carry out tasks depends also on their ability to use appropriate language forms. Richards (1999) points out this “grammar gap” in the development of linguistic competence making use of “task-work activities”, which often results in fluency “marked by low levels of linguistic accuracy” in language classrooms (p.7).

In accomplishing tasks, learners may also avoid using certain forms that they are expected to use but which may be beyond their ability to handle effectively. This may also prevent them from experimenting with the language and achieving higher levels of complexity in the use of the language. To address this grammar gap, it became commonly accepted by the 1990s that there is a need to focus on form somehow within CLT or TBLT to facilitate effective communication. There is a tendency to integrate form-focused instruction with communicative interaction. This compromising attitude towards the relative positions of form and meaning has been expressed by Skehan (1998): “The challenge of task-based instruction is to contrive sufficient focus on form to enable interlanguage development to proceed without compromising the naturalness of the communication that tasks can generate” (p.4).

Besides the problem of naturalness, there are also other problems of focusing on form in TBLT. Loschky and Bley-Vroman (1993) refer to the problem of producing tasks with a focus on form. They distinguish between three types of involvement of a grammatical structure in a task, which are task-naturalness, task-utility, and task-essentialness: “In task-naturalness, a grammatical construction may arise naturally during the performance of a particular task, but the task can often be performed perfectly well, even quite easily,

without it. In the case of task-utility, it is possible to complete a task without the structure, but with the structure the task becomes easier. The most extreme demand a task can place on a structure is essentialness: the task cannot be successfully performed unless the structure is used” (p.132).

Of the three types of involvement, task-essentialness is the most difficult to achieve, as suggested by Loschky and Bley-Vroman (1993): “Essentialness is a much more stringent requirement than utility; to achieve it requires correspondingly more control over the discourse. Thus, the goal in production tasks is likely to be limited to task-utility or task-naturalness, while in comprehension tasks, task-essentialness can more easily be achieved” (p.139). As tasks are basically production-oriented, it is difficult to ensure that certain forms are essential for performing them. This often results in the accomplishment of tasks without utilising forms learners are expected to use. This possibility to avoid using the targeted forms is not favourable for language development.

To resolve this tension between form and meaning, researchers have suggested various ways of incorporating a focus on form into TBLT. One of these is to induce a focus on form as something quite separate from the task, while still being a part of it. Some researchers draw a distinction between “task” and “exercise” as devices to allow learners to practise using the language. Tasks are carried out to perform real-world activities for accomplishing defined communication outcomes. The authentic use of language is often contextualised. Practice with a discrete, uncontextualised focus on grammatical forms often makes use of exercises rather than tasks. As distinguished by Ellis (2003), tasks are activities that call for primarily meaning-focused language use, while exercises are activities that call for primarily form-focused language use. According to this distinction, a task is concerned with “pragmatic meaning”, that is, “the use of language in context”, whereas an exercise is concerned with “semantic meaning”, that is, “the systematic

meaning that specific forms can convey irrespective of context” (p.3). This distinction implies that grammar teaching within TBLT is therefore not necessarily task-based in itself, but these discrete exercises can be allowed in TBLT as they can focus attention on the grammatical forms which will be used for the accomplishment of the task later.

“Meaning” and “form” can also be considered as two separate aspects which compete for learners’ attention during the learning process, as second language learners are described by VanPatten (1996) as limited capacity processors, which asserts that they cannot attend to different aspects of learning at the same time. Attending to one of them will mean being able to give less attention to the other.

To resolve the uncomfortable relationship between form and meaning and allow for the integration of form-focused instruction in TBLT, some researchers also try to make a distinction between a strong and weak form of TBLT. According to Skehan (1996), “a strong form sees tasks as the basic unit of teaching and one which drives the acquisition process. A weak form sees tasks as a vital part of language instruction but one that is embedded in a more complex pedagogical context. They are necessary, but may be preceded by focused instruction, and after use, may be followed by focused instruction which is contingent upon task performance” (p.39). Richards (1999) also suggests that TBLT with a strong focus on grammar, which accommodates a variety of form-focused activities, is usually a weak form of TBLT. As a production-oriented teaching approach, TBLT is never really receptive of a strong emphasis on grammar. Grammar and TBLT are inherently incompatible subjects. Their co-existence calls for an effort to make adjustments on both sides. A possible way of doing this is to make task-based teaching less task-based, and grammar teaching less grammar-focused. The former means incorporating some form-focused activities at different stages around task completion. The latter means making grammar teaching less explicit and analytical and more

production-oriented.

A distinction between “focus on form” and “focus on forms” has been drawn by a number of researchers concerning grammar teaching within a communicative framework. Long (1992) originally referred to “focus on forms” as an approach for organising instruction for synthetic syllabuses which emphasise the accumulation of individual language structures. “Focus on form”, on the other hand, was considered as another methodological option which draws learners’ attention to specific language structures arising out of a communicative activity. “Focus on forms” is now generally considered as attention to decontextualised grammatical structures and accuracy in language, while “focus on form” is incidental, where “attention to form in the context of a communicative activity is not predetermined but rather occurs in accordance with the participants’ linguistic needs as the activity proceeds” (Ellis, 2006, p.100-1). In other words, it is a “focus on form” which “entails a prerequisite engagement in meaning before attention to linguistic features can be expected to be effective” (Long, 1991, as cited in Doughty & Williams, 1998, p. 3). “Focus on form”, therefore, refers to drawing attention to specific language forms which arise from tasks and occur in meaningful contexts. It is this kind of form-focused approach which is often found acceptable in TBLT, rather than the type of pervasive form-focused approach which aims at achieving overall accuracy usually referred to as “focus on forms”. In TBLT, it is often the “weak” form of grammar instruction (focus on form) rather than the “strong” form of grammar instruction (focus on forms) which is permissible.

It is obvious that most of the recent researchers agree to some extent that there is a need to build some kind of form-focused activities into task-based teaching. They have put forward various ideas about how a focus on form can be induced in TBLT. The next section will report studies which explore various ways of teaching grammar within TBLT.

These studies may not be very different from the studies that were discussed in section 2.3, under the topics of “explicit versus implicit learning”; “input-oriented versus output-oriented approaches”; and “noticing and consciousness raising”. However, they will reveal a more obvious intention to integrate form-focused instruction into TBLT.

2.4.2 Different ways of achieving a focus on form in TBLT

As a teaching approach, TBLT is ill-defined. As suggested by Markee (1997), it can be taken as “an umbrella term that subsumes the process syllabus, the procedural syllabus, and pedagogical applications of more recent theoretical and empirical work in SLA studies, classroom research, and action research” (p.35). It assumes different identities according to the purposes of different researchers. The shape that TBLT takes in the classroom also depends not only on task design, but also on the way that it is implemented by the teacher. As is argued by Nunan (1989), “with the development of communicative language teaching [and also TBLT], the separation of syllabus design and methodology becomes increasingly problematical” (p.1).

Littlewood (2004) also suggests adopting a broader definition to cover both communicative and task-based language teaching, by calling it “communication-oriented language teaching”. He believes that this can help us better conceptualise the complementary roles of form-focused and meaning-focused tasks in our methodology, as it allows us to focus on key dimensions that distinguish (from the learner's perspective) different types of tasks, degrees of task-involvement and degrees of focus on form or meaning.

Within such a broad and indefinite teaching approach, the ways that form-focused instruction can be integrated into it are naturally indeterminate or varied, as researchers

make various attempts to focus on form through different types of task design and implementation.

A. Task design and implementation

A number of studies have investigated various aspects of task characteristics and their effects on teaching and learning. Pica et al. (1993) started from the assumption that acquisition takes place as a function of the learner engaging in interaction. This leads to the need for learners to express and negotiate meanings which may stretch the use of interlanguage. Basing on this assumption, they analysed tasks in terms of their potential to lead to comprehensible input, using a categorisation system which distinguished between different types of interactional activities and communication goals.

Duff (1986) examined the contrast between convergent and divergent tasks. The former allows a commonly agreed solution at the end, whereas the latter accepts a range of opinions. Duff's prediction that convergent tasks would lead to more favourable negotiation of meaning was not fulfilled at the end, as there was no overall difference in the amount of language produced with each task type. However, the study did point to significant interactional and discoursal differences. The convergent tasks produced many more and shorter turns, while the divergent tasks generated fewer but longer and more complex turns.

The study by Brown (1991) attempted to find factors influencing language learning through small group interaction. He proposed three different dimensions for analysing task types: the degree of "tightness" or "looseness" of the tasks, the degree of "openness" or "closeness" of the tasks, and the degree to which the tasks could be described as "procedural", meaning that they led to discussions about what decisions to make, or "interpretive", meaning that they led to the participants having to interpret data according

to their understanding and experience. The study found no significant differences in the level of modification (in terms of fluency and repair) occurring in the three task types. However, the use of instructional input and hypothesizing was significantly greater for the interpretative tasks than for the procedural. The study suggests that the level of challenge, measured by its procedural or interpretive nature, may be an important factor for pushing learners into expressing their ideas in more complex language.

Skehan and Foster (1997) investigated the effects of different task types on learners' oral performance. Three different types of tasks were used: information exchange task, narrative task and decision-making task. Performance on the tasks was measured in terms of fluency, complexity, and error-free clauses. Results indicated that task types have different effects on performance. The personal and decision-making tasks lead to significantly higher accuracy than the narrative task, while the information exchange task leads to lower complexity than the other two tasks. The narrative and decision-making tasks generate least fluency compared to the personal task. In addition to task characteristics, planning condition and time also had an effect on complexity and fluency – the more the planning time, the greater the complexity and fluency.

Planning time and condition is one aspect of task implementation. Research has been undertaken on other aspects of task implementation for inducing a focus on form. Skehan (1998) reviewed research on two opposing ways to implement tasks which he called "structure-oriented tasks" and "communicative-driven tasks." For the former, Loschky and Bley-Vroman (1993) distinguish between three structure-to-task relationships: naturalness, utility and essentialness. Loschky and Bley-Vroman (1993, as cited in Skehan, 1998) recommend the third criterion as the most difficult, but the most desirable to attain for focusing on form. They suggest making use of implicit learning materials which are artificially transformed so that particular structures become salient.

Willis (1993, as cited in Skehan, 1998) investigate the other approach, making use of “communicative-driven tasks”. He proposes that tasks which meet what might be termed a “naturalness” condition, which are not conformity-based or display-oriented for any particular structure, will lead learners to develop language effectively. Through transacting tasks, learners will, in an unforced way, generate the most significant lexis of a language, and will become able to use such lexis in syntactic patterns. Compared to the former approach, the latter seems to be calling for a less explicit and more natural way of focusing on form.

Research in the 2000s diverged into various different aspects of task design and task implementation for achieving a focus on form. Garcia Mayo (2002) reported on the results of a study carried out with high-intermediate/advanced EFL learners who collaboratively completed two different types of form-focused tasks (a dictogloss and a text reconstruction). The learners’ interaction in both tasks was codified and language-related episodes (LREs) identified. The results indicate that there is a need for classroom teachers and researchers to carefully consider the choice of task and how learners interpret and complete it.

The study by Samuda (2001) investigated an important aspect of task implementation, the role of the teacher in inducing a focus on form in TBLT. As suggested by Samuda, the relationship between task and teacher is essentially complementary. Borrowing the term “lead from behind” from Gibbons (1998), she stresses that the role for the teacher is to complement and support what the task has set in motion in the formulation and negotiation of meanings. In her study, Samuda explored the complementary relationship between task and teacher in the context of tasks in which semantically complex form-meaning mappings are to be made. The teacher participant in the study tried out an

important role in complementing the task by guiding attention towards form-meaning relationships. At different stages of her teaching process, the teacher attempted to induce different types of explicit and implicit focus on form through discursal or interactional means. Results indicated that the targeted forms occurred in both the spoken and written output of the learners, which Samuda concluded as being indicative of the initial form-meaning mapping and therefore evidence of language development in making use of the targeted forms.

The need for teachers to attend to learner needs in TBLT was explored in another study which investigated the relationship between tasks and learners. In a small-scale study which was conducted on eight intermediate learners of English, Murphy (2003) investigated the relationship between tasks and learners. The findings indicated that there were unforeseen results in task performance, as individual learners interacted differently with the tasks and devised alternative strategies to complete them. This showed that the influence of learners on the task can jeopardise the task designer's intended pedagogic outcomes. Murphy (2003) concluded that the manipulation of task characteristics and processing conditions is not sufficient to focus the learner's attention on the competing goals of accuracy, fluency and complexity. It is also necessary to consider the ways in which learners interact with tasks within the classroom environment. This has implications for teachers and task designers in making decisions for planning, designing and enacting task-based activities from the initial stage of "task-as-workplan" to the actual implementation of "task in process" (Breen 1987, p.23). Further classroom-based research would therefore help develop the potential in task-based learning taking into account the learners' contribution.

Another study by Fujii and Mackey (2009) explored learner-learner interactions in an authentic EFL classroom. The study sheds light on how patterns of interaction may be

shaped by cultural, contextual, and interlocutor-related factors, thus helping to inform considerations for task-based instructional design.

Integrating a focus on form into different stages of TBLT

Besides investigating different ways of inducing a focus on form through manipulating task characteristics and conditions, researchers have also explored how form-focused instruction can be integrated into different stages of TBLT. Bygate (1994) believes that there are four main areas where a teacher may intervene in task-based learning: pre-task preparation; task selection; manipulation of on-task conditions; and post-task follow-up. All these areas provide opportunities for the teacher to influence learning by varying different aspects of the learning task to induce a focus on form. Skehan (1996) also suggests that methodological procedures can be organised at three stages of task-based teaching: pre-task, during-task and post-task.

Similar ideas about inducing a focus on form at various stages of task-based teaching have been put forward by Ellis (2003), Willis (1996), and Willis & Willis (2007). Willis & Willis (2007) particularly stress the usefulness of focusing on specific forms at the end of a task sequence. They believe that there are three advantages of doing that: (a) It helps learners to make sense of the language they have experienced; (b) It highlights language they are likely to experience in the future; and (c) It provides motivation.

Form-focused feedback

There has also been a body of research investigating the effectiveness of feedback during and after the task. Some of these studies explore feedback during the process of interaction, while others concern post-task corrective feedback.

A number of studies relate the use of feedback to input-oriented versus output-oriented

strategies, and explicit versus implicit attention to form. A few of them have investigated the effectiveness of explicit or implicit corrective feedback (Dabaghi, 2006; Ellis, Loewen, & Erlam, 2006; Sheen, 2006; Varnosfadrani & Basturkmen, 2009). Results generally support the usefulness of explicit feedback over implicit feedback, or the advantage of explicit feedback for enhancing implicit as well as explicit knowledge, particularly in the study by Ellis et al. (2006) and Varnosfadrani and Basturkmen (2009).

Some of the studies also investigated the usefulness of feedback during the process of interaction. Nassaji's (2007) study investigated the usefulness of two major types of interactional feedback (elicitation and reformulation) in dyadic interaction. These findings confirm the role of salience and opportunities for pushed output as important characteristics of effective feedback.

Another study focuses on recasts in face-to-face interaction. Lai, Fei, and Roots (2008) studied the efficacy of recasts in text-based online chatting in computer-mediated communication (CMC). It was revealed that participants explained contingent recasts significantly more often than non-contingent recasts. Furthermore, working memory and pre-writing were found to mediate the contingency effect, but learner proficiency level was found to have an influence on neither the noticing of recasts nor the contingency effect.

The study reported by Sauro (2009) investigated the impact of two types of computer-mediated corrective feedback on the development of adult learners' L2 knowledge: (1) corrective feedback that reformulates the error in the form of recasts, and (2) corrective feedback that supplies the learner with metalinguistic information about the nature of the error. Results showed no significant advantage for either feedback type on immediate or sustained gains in target form knowledge, although the metalinguistic group showed

significant immediate gains relative to the control condition.

Out-of-class grammar learning/practice

Studies by researchers like Murphy (2003) and Fujii & Mackey (2009) (as discussed on p.43 to 44 of this section) have shown that learners play an important role in the process of task implementation. The ways that learners interact with the tasks and the other learners have a great impact on successful learning in a task-based context. Their learning effort may also extend beyond the classroom, especially for grammar learning which often requires repeated practice.

There has been a small body of research which investigated out-of-class grammar learning or practice, most notably in connection with the use of computer technology, such as computer-assisted language learning (CALL) or computer-mediated communication (CMC).

The study by Heller (2005) investigated the usefulness of a web-based English grammar learning tool with an extensive body of authentic English language examples, the Chemnitz Internet Grammar (CING), for the self-learning of intermediate learners of English. The CING software provided a variety of learning materials organised according to inductive or deductive principles, which included explanations of grammatical rules as well as opportunities for users to practise their grammar skills by completing gap-fill, multiple choice or correction exercises. Learners could also try to “discover” the grammar rules themselves by navigating the authentic language corpus and making use of the more inductive materials. The results from a questionnaire survey on usability and content difficulty indicated that CING provided a generally positive learning experience, although learners who better understood the design and content structure seemed to have a more positive experience in working with the CING than those who did not. The study

highlights the potential of this kind of on-line grammar self-learning tool for intermediate English learners. The usability and materials evaluation, as well as the analysis of learner needs in this study will be useful for the future development of similar on-line grammar learning software.

Another study by AbuSeileek (2009) aimed to explore the effectiveness of using an online-based course on the learning of sentence types inductively and deductively. A pre-test/post-test design (between-subject) was used to investigate the effect of two factors: medium (computer-based learning vs. non-computer-based learning) and method (induction vs. deduction) on students' learning of sentence types. The computer-based learning method was found to be effective for more complex and elaborate structures, like the complex sentence and compound complex sentence, and more complicated grammar structures were better taught by means of the deductive technique. None of the inductive and deductive techniques was reported to be more effective with simple grammatical structures such as the simple sentence and compound sentence. The study shows that computer-based grammar learning can be useful for more complex and elaborate structures, whether the inductive or deductive method is used. Computer-based learning can also offer opportunities for promoting self-learning and a student-centred approach in grammar learning.

Other studies investigated the use of computer technology for practising the language structures. The study by Ozdener and Satar (2008) was conducted on Turkish high school English students. It attempted to improve students' fluency in speaking through computer-mediated communication (CMC) technologies (in both text and voice forms), which provided them with opportunities for practising and internalising language structures. The results of the study shed light on the strategies that can be used in computer-mediated communication technologies, taking into account the experiences

and perceptions of the learners. CMC can provide a facilitative context for students with low proficiency and high foreign language anxiety levels to improve their language skills. It can be a valuable alternative to face-to-face interaction in dealing with the challenges of speaking a foreign language faced by the students to supplement classroom teaching.

Son (2007) believes that computer technology can enhance students' motivation to learn by providing authentic and interesting learning materials and activities. He examined the use of the internet for language learning through a study of ESL learners' experiences on web-based language learning activities in an English language intensive course for overseas students. In this study, students were required to complete two types of web-based language learning (WBLL) activities: (1) pre-created language exercises that are easily accessible on the web; and (2) task-based web activities exploiting web resources to produce certain outcomes involving communication, information collection or problem-solving. The students' engagement in the suggested activities was observed and their attitudes towards the activities were analysed. Data collected demonstrate that the web is a useful tool for learning ESL, especially as a supplementary resource. Most students also found the WBLL activities to be valuable in terms of accessing information, receiving instant feedback on exercise errors and having the opportunity to work by themselves. Moreover, teacher facilitation is also an important factor in the success of computer-assisted instruction in the language classroom.

Effective grammar teaching and learning in TBLT depends on various approaches of inducing a focus on form through task design and implementation. The ways that both teachers and learners contribute to different stages of the teaching and learning process are also important factors. The next section will explore a recent research effort to theorise in a systematic way about the various types of form-focused activities often used in TBLT.

B. Focused tasks

Ellis (2003) proposes a framework of using “focused tasks” to induce a focus on form in TBLT. Ellis’ “focused tasks” mean tasks designed or implemented with an intention to focus attention on form, incorporating various major types of form-focus instruction within the tasks, such as reception-based (input-based), production-based (output-based) and grammatical consciousness-raising strategies. According to Ellis (2003), “focused tasks” are tasks which can be employed to “elicit use of specific linguistic features, whether by design or by the use of methodological procedures that focus attention on form in the implementation of a task” (p.141). He proposes three types of focused tasks, namely, structure-based production tasks, comprehension tasks and consciousness-raising tasks. These three types of focused tasks can be used at different stages of input, interaction or production.

According to Ellis’ (2003) description, focused tasks must meet the criteria of tasks in general. They can be receptive or involve production. That is to say, they can either focus incidental attention on form receptively or elicit incidental production of a targeted feature. Ellis (2003) also describes two psycholinguistic bases for focused tasks. The first involves skill-building theories and the notion of automatic processing. In order for the controlled processes/declarative knowledge that learners gain to evolve into automatic processes/procedural knowledge, learners need to practise the skill, which can be done through the use of a focused task. The second psycholinguistic basis involves theories of implicit learning. As suggested in Ellis (2003), the weak non-interface model proposed in Ellis (1993; 1994) (based on Schmidt’s Noticing Hypothesis) describes explicit knowledge as facilitating implicit learning in two major ways. First, it aids in the process of noticing relevant structures in the input stage in order to turn them into intake. Second, it may also assist learners in noticing the gap between what they themselves are saying

and how the feature is used in the input they are exposed to in the monitoring stage.

The focused task is not really a new concept for form-focused instruction in TBLT. Rather, it is an attempt to theorise about focusing on form in TBLT systematically. In fact, the focus task embodies various strategies of achieving a focus on form in TBLT. It makes use of task design or implementation; it tackles explicit or implicit methods; it can be input-oriented or output-oriented; and it can even make use of grammatical consciousness-raising strategies, where grammar is the content of communication.

The blurring relationship between meaning and form has led recent researchers to experiment with different ways of teaching grammar in TBLT, with no single method being considered as the most acceptable and effective in inducing a focus on form. Methodologies vary from the more traditional to the more innovative, and researchers have different justifications for the effectiveness of the methods they proposed. Some researchers even claim that grammar instruction in TBLT has something in common with the traditional presentation-practice-production (PPP) teaching approach, whose failure in facilitating communication has often been considered as an important cause for the emergence of the communicative and task-based teaching approaches. This interesting relationship between TBLT and PPP will be examined further in the next section.

2.4.3 TBLT and Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP)

Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) was a common method for second language teaching developed in the 1970s and the 1980s and is still popular with many teachers today. In this grammar-focused method, teaching is organised according to the grammatical structures to be taught, and it is divided into three stages. The presentation stage presents the grammatical structure to the learners. At the practice stage, the learners

practise it in controlled activities which focus on the accurate reproduction of the structure. The final production stage allows the learners greater freedom to express meanings more spontaneously using the target forms (Hedge, 2000).

Many researchers have commented on the inadequacy of PPP. They have expressed doubts about whether the explanation of the structures and controlled repetition in the practice stage will contribute to implicit grammatical knowledge and facilitate the acquisition of the structure (Ritchie, 2003). Repetition does not provide rich input either, and lessons that consist of repetitive drilling are not interesting to students.

The 1980s witnessed an anti-grammar movement in the emergence of the communicative and TBLT approaches, which addressed some of the shortcomings of PPP. These approaches questioned the rigid structure of presentation, practices and production, and focused more on authentic communication or the accomplishment of communicative tasks which clearly emphasised production rather than presentation and practice. However, these are not entirely free of problems either. TBLT emphasises production or language use, but it is often the case that in completing a task, targeted language structures can be avoided and alternative means of communication can be used. The use of the language can also be minimised in tasks which stress real-life communicative outcomes like solving a problem or completing a plan. Some researchers have therefore questioned the usefulness of TBLT in helping learners really acquire language structures. Without an intention to focus attention on specific language forms, and making them essential for completing the task (task-essentialness) (Ellis, 2003; Loschky & Bley-Vroman, 1993), it is doubtful whether the learners' language competence can really be pushed forward through production.

In fact, there are some similarities between tasks with a grammar focus and activities used

in the PPP approach. A good example is one type of focused task described by Ellis (2003): consciousness-raising tasks. With their emphasis on drawing attention to form, the activities used are sometimes quite similar to those used in the “practice” stage of the PPP approach. In one example of a consciousness-raising task presented in Ellis (2003), learners are asked to “1. Underline the time expression in the passage. 2. Write the time phrases into this table.” (p.18). Underlining grammatical structures and writing words and expression are common strategies used in the practice stage of the PPP approach, which can include a range of activities ranging from the more discrete exercises to the more teacher-guided comprehension or production activities. Sometimes a smaller number of these activities can also be used in the presentation stage.

If Ellis’ (2003) consciousness-raising tasks are examined closely, one would wonder if they really fit into his definition of a task which embodies the six criterial features (described in the section 2.4.1 of this chapter, under the heading “How grammar relates to TBLT”). It is doubtful whether they involve a primary focus on meaning (criterion 2), as the focus seems to rest more on the language forms. More definitely, they do not really involve real-world language processes, as the major content of communication involves grammatical structures, which are seldom the topic of real-life communication. These tasks can be at most considered as a “weak form” of TBL as described by Ellis and the other researchers (Skehan, 1996, as cited in Richards, 1999).

To resolve this conceptual confusion, a distinction can be made between the task-based teaching of grammar and teaching grammar in TBLT. The former involves using a task that fits into the definition with the six criterial features, which is normally a fully-fledged task within TBLT. If such a fully-fledged task is used to teach grammar, the emphasis is naturally on having learners produce the targeted structures in carrying out the task. In such a case, all the arguments about task-essentialness and the possibility of avoiding the

use of the targeted structures and the failure in drawing learners' attention to the form bounce back. The latter approach, teaching grammar in TBLT, allows the use of activities which do not fit into the strict definition of a fully-fledged task. It implies that grammar-based teaching approaches which can fit into TBLT are acceptable. In other words, grammar teaching can be explicit and grammar-based, or more implicit and task-based. The tension between meaning and form is always there. If more emphasis is put on the explicit teaching of the form, it naturally follows that the activity is less task-based, or represents a weaker version of TBLT. This all comes back to the fundamental issue of whether a strong form or a weak form of task-based teaching is adopted. If a weak form of task-based teaching is acceptable, it also means that a range of more explicit grammar teaching approaches can be permitted in TBLT.

Research has shown that many of the Asian countries which have gradually changed to CLT and TBLT approaches have not really abandoned PPP completely. Rather, many of them have incorporated different levels of the PPP approach into their own type of TBLT (Hui, 1997 as cited in Carless, 1999; Edwards & Willis, 2005). For regions with a culture of more grammatical emphasis, PPP is still considered a useful approach for focusing attention on grammar.

As suggested by Cadorath and Harris (1998), the introduction of TBLT in many countries has to be grounded on local realities. The reality is that areas with a culture of more grammatical emphasis in second language teaching find it hard to abandon PPP completely while they are gradually changing to TBLT approaches. Many of them have incorporated varying levels of the PPP approach into their own type of TBLT. As described by Ritchie (2003), "explanation and practice of specific features of language is likely, under some circumstances, to be of benefit" (p.118).

Carless (1999) discusses the need to adapt curriculum innovations according to local contexts, as in the case of the implementation of the Target-oriented Curriculum (TOC) in Hong Kong. Having much in common with process-oriented, communicative or task-based approaches, TOC is not easy to implement in the classroom. What was actually implemented was more like a weak form of the communicative approach, in which a PPP approach is used predominantly and learning tasks characteristically occur in the production stage of this sequence. This approach seems to permit a high degree of teacher control in the presentation and practice stages, and some opportunity for more active student participation in the production stage.

Similar adjustments according to the local context have been reported in other studies which investigate the implementation of TBLT in Hong Kong (Mak, 2004; Tong, 2005; Zhang, 2005). Elsewhere in other parts of the world, the retention of features of the PPP approach is also evident in the changeover to the TBLT approach (Cadorath & Harris, 1998; Ritchie, 2003).

There have also been suggestions that different levels of the PPP approach can be incorporated into different stages of TBLT. The traditional order of presentation followed by practice and then production can also be changed, or even reversed, as suggested by Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) and Littlewood (2004). Grundy (2001) also suggests using modified instruction models based on the PPP structure, which he refers to as “new wave PPP”. These models allow modified forms of the presentation, practice and production stages and a different order of conducting these procedures, such as Scrivener’s ARC instruction model (Authentic use, Restricted use, Clarification/Focus) or other variants like CRA (Clarification/Focus, Restricted use, Authentic use), or ARAC (Authentic use, Restricted use, Authentic use, Clarification/Focus).

The above discussion indicates that recent theorists and researchers have shown more flexibility and tolerance in the ways grammar can be taught within TBLT. Some describe the use of a “multifaceted approach” (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999), while others refer to a more “eclectic approach” (Hedge, 2000). In short, there is an increasing trend of a variety of grammar teaching approaches - whether task-based in themselves or not - are becoming acceptable within TBLT.

2.5 Current concepts and approaches of pedagogical grammar in SLA

The previous sections examine grammar teaching in relation to current teaching approaches like CLT and TBLT, where grammar teaching is often considered to be one component within these teaching approaches rather than taking centre stage. Its role is mainly to provide language support to facilitate the accomplishment of tasks and communicative activities.

This section explores grammar teaching in its own right, in the name of “pedagogical grammar”. Current grammar books which focus on the teaching and learning of grammar will be examined. As these are often used as reference books for second language teachers or supplementary teaching materials for the communicative or task-based curriculum, the pedagogical approaches underlying these books have an impact on how grammar teaching is practised within TBLT, and how the grammar materials within task-based textbooks are designed. These books may also show evidence of how the task-based approach impact on grammar pedagogy, where grammar is the main target of teaching and learning, instead of a subsidiary of this major second language teaching approach. Both the task-based textbooks and grammar books may mutually influence each other. Analyses of both types of books can enhance understanding of the relationship between grammar teaching and task-based teaching and help to contextualise

the discussion of the data from the lesson observations and interviews later in this thesis.

For the purpose of the analyses and discussion of this thesis, the following time-honoured definition of pedagogical grammar by Sharwood Smith (1980) is adopted: “Instructional strategies which draw the attention of the learner to specifically structural regularities of the language, as distinct from the message content, will under certain specified conditions significantly increase the rate of acquisition over and above the rate expected from learners acquiring that language under natural circumstances where attention to form may be minimal and sporadic” (as cited in Rutherford & Sharwood-Smith, 1988, p.4)

As indicated in the definition, pedagogical grammar is targeted at the learner with an aim to facilitate the acquisition of language forms. It is different from other types of more theoretical grammar like linguistic or academic grammar, as its major concern is for facilitating the teaching and learning of a language, most often a foreign/second language (Bygate et al., 1994; Odlin, 1994b; Rutherford & Sharwood-Smith, 1988). For Candlin (1973, as cited in Hedge, 2000, p.152), pedagogical grammar acts as “filters” or “interpreters” between the detailed formal grammars of linguists and the classroom. This means that it is “structured according to the age and level of proficiency of the learners and in terms of their objectives for learning English.”

Instead of being a static concept, pedagogical grammar is slippery in meaning (Little, 1994) , hybrid (Odlin, 1994a) and changeable in nature. It can be used to denote the pedagogical content or pedagogical process, or both content and process (Little, 1994), subject to the changing demands involved in teaching and learning a language.

According to McGrath (2002), “Grammar teaching is motivated by two objectives: to transmit knowledge and to facilitate skill development. ... A learner needs (1) to know

what the various components of this structure are and how to combine them and (2) the ability to put the correct components together quickly. But he or she also needs (3) to know what the structure means and when it is appropriate to use it and (4) the ability to use it spontaneously and appropriately” (p.97). With the development of the communicative and task-based approaches, the recent trend is to put more emphasis on skill development. As suggested by Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman (1999), the purpose of teaching grammar is to help students use the structures accurately, meaningfully and appropriately. Therefore grammar should be taught as a skill rather than an area of knowledge.

This emphasis on the ability to use the structures results in the tendency to approach pedagogical grammar from a functional perspective. The term functional has a number of meanings in linguistics, but for Lock (1996), it refers to an approach to understanding grammar that “focuses on how language works to achieve a variety of different functional and communicative purposes. The emphasis is thus on how the purpose for which language is used and the contexts in which it appears affect the choices speakers and writers make” (p.ix). This “functional” perspective on grammar teaching has its roots in Halliday’s (1994) discussion of the function of language of creating meaning in different social contexts, that is: (1) ideational meaning (for expressing our views of the world); (2) interpersonal meaning (for building and maintaining relationships with other people); and (3) textual meaning (for expressing our meaning through spoken or written texts). These different occasions for social interaction clearly require suitable choices of appropriate language structures.

To see how grammar is pedagogically presented in books focusing on grammar, this

section analyses the structure and content of 14 popular grammar books¹ which are newly published or were published in a new edition in the 1990s and 2000s. They are all stocked in at least 4 major universities in Hong Kong, which is an indication of their popularity as grammar references or supplementary materials. These grammar books are books with a primary focus on grammar, unlike English textbooks which cover various language skills, of which grammar is only one of the components. There are two major types of grammar books. One type can be called grammar reference books. They are books with explanations and examples of grammatical structures, which are for consulting rather than working through. Another type includes both grammar explanations and practice exercises/activities. Very often the whole unit is devoted to covering a particular grammatical structure with materials for explanation and practice or production. It is the latter type of grammar books that this section focuses on, in order to explore the current approaches to pedagogical grammar.

Before analysing these books, ideas from the foreword or introduction of these books will be examined so as to uncover the grammar pedagogy underlying the design and organisation of the books. These ideas will also be discussed in relation to the relevant literature concerning grammar pedagogy in second language acquisition.

¹ The 14 grammar books examined are: Ackles, N. M. (2003). *The grammar guide: Developing language skills for academic success*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press; Buttre, L. & Podnecky, J. (2005). *Grammar links 1 – 3: A theme-based course for reference and practice*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin; Carter, R., Hughes, R. & McCarthy, M. (2000). *Exploring grammar in context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Celce-Murcia, M & Larsen-Freeman, D. (1999). *The grammar book*. Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House; Elbaum, S. N. (2001). *Grammar in context 1-3*. Boston: Thomas Heinle; Jackson, H. (1990). *Grammar and meaning: A semantic approach to English grammar*. London & New York: Longman; Jackson, H. (2002). *Grammar and vocabulary: A resource book for students*. London: Routledge; Knepler, M. (1990). *Grammar with a purpose: A contextualised approach*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle; Larsen-Freeman, D. (Ed.) (2007). *Grammar dimensions: Form, meaning and use 1 – 4*. Boston, MA.: Heinle & Heinle; Lester, M. (2001). *Grammar and usage in the classroom*. Boston, Mass.: Allyn and Bacon; Murphy, R. (1994). *English grammar in use*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Thornbury, S (2004). *Natural grammar*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Vince, M. (2007). *Macmillan English Grammar in context: Intermediate*. Oxford: Macmillan; Yule, G. (2006). *Explaining English grammar*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

2.5.1 Grammar pedagogy underlying the design and organisation of the SLA grammar books

Most of the grammar books surveyed have taken the position of attending to form, meaning and use in presenting grammar. Some of them have made this overall approach clear in the foreword or introduction of their books or series (Butlre & Podnecky, 2000; Elbaum, 1996; Larsen-Freeman, 1997). Larsen-Freeman (1997), for example, suggests in the “Foreword” of the series of *Grammar Dimensions* that the three dimensions of form, meaning and use are equally important: “While grammar does indeed involve form, in order to communicate, language users also need to know what the forms mean and when to use them appropriately. In fact, it is sometimes learning the meaning or appropriate use of a particular grammar structure that represents the greatest long-term learning challenge for students, not learning to form it” (p.xvii). Larsen-freemen believes that presenting grammatical structures in the correct form is not so difficult as being able to use them in appropriate situations to express intended meanings. Similar views are also put forward in other grammar books, such as in *The Grammar Book*: “What ESL/EFL teachers should be helping students do is be able to use the structures of English accurately, meaningfully and appropriately. Thus ESL/EFL teachers might better think of what they do as teaching ‘grammaring’ - a skill - rather than teaching grammar as an area of knowledge” (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999, p.5).

With this emphasis on using the forms, grammatical knowledge and terminology are considered as less important and they should not be taken as the main purpose for teaching or learning grammar. As suggested by Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman (1999), explicit grammatical information like metalanguage and grammatical description and rules should be considered as “a means to an end, not an end in itself” (p.6).

As grammatical knowledge and explanation is of secondary importance, some grammar

books tend not to give detailed, in-depth and lengthy grammatical descriptions directly. Many of the more recently published books tend to present grammar in a more contextualised and inductive way, such as starting with reading passages or practice exercises or activities rather than giving direct explanations. This kind of approach is explained by Carter, Hughes, and McCarthy (2000), who called it “grammar in context” and “grammar as choice” in the “Foreword” to their book, *Exploring Grammar in Context*: “In this book the emphasis on grammar in context means that the examples also frequently contain several sentences or short conversational extracts and show grammar at work across the boundaries of the sentence or the individual speaking turn. The book regularly draws attention to grammar as choice and gives the learner opportunities to exercise grammatical choice in relation to particular contexts in which the language is used” (p.vii).

This emphasis on the communicative function of grammar also finds expression in the lexical approach to pedagogical grammar. A precondition for effective communication is the ability to use words meaningfully in appropriate social contexts. Little (1994) explains this relationship between words and structures in the following analysis: “But when our starting point for grammatical exploration is an instance of language in use, what we have in front of us is not a structure but words, and our problem is not to associate those words with an abstract structure but to discover how precisely they are behaving in relation to one another” (p.106).

There is, therefore, a tendency for at least some of the grammar books to refer to grammar as lexico-grammar, that is, a combination of vocabulary (or words) and structures. As is suggested by Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999), grammar and lexicon were traditionally seen as two distinct components of language, but there is an increasing tendency to conceive the two as being on two opposing poles of one continuum in

pedagogical grammar, rather than two totally dichotomous concepts. For instance, at the grammatical end of the continuum we could place the function words, such as the preposition “of” and the verb “be”. At the other end we could assign content words, such as “garden” and “grow”. In grammar books, chunks of words with specific functions are often presented as grammatical structures. It is in fact hard to separate grammar and vocabulary in most of the grammar books which are supposed to be focusing on grammar. Also, current pedagogical grammar no longer emphasises isolated grammatical rules. They stress the communication of meaning, for which vocabulary plays a significant role. In fact, the study of grammar and vocabulary together is the professed aim for at least one of the grammar books studied in this section, because it facilitates the understanding of language in real life. As stated in the introductory section of the book *Grammar and Vocabulary*, “The aim of this book in the series is to open up to you the fascinating study of the grammar and vocabulary of the English language, and to encourage you to analyse the language that you hear and read in your daily life” (Jackson, 2002).

This relationship between grammar and vocabulary has been explored by a number of researchers as well. Lewis (1993), for example, believes that it is important to pay attention to the links between grammatical and lexical knowledge in teaching and learning grammar. He calls this a “lexical approach”, which is “based on a perception of language and learning as essentially holistic, or organic” (p.ix). He suggests that grammar is sometimes not clearly distinct from vocabulary, as knowledge of grammar develops from the knowledge of the words. Therefore, the mastery of grammar is not identical with the mastery of correct sentence patterns, as “there are many sub-sentential grammatical patterns, in particular those associated with word grammar, and many supra-sentential patterns - features which structure discourse as a whole. Preoccupation with ‘correct sentences’ has meant many important patterns of the language have been overlooked” (p.135).

The lexical approach recognises meaning as central to language, and the choice of words and structures as the basis of meaning. It proposes a change of content for grammar teaching. Traditional formal grammar explanation and controlled practice for drilling the structures are both considered to be of very limited value. Knowledge of grammar should be taught as a receptive skill, and the symbiotic relationship between explanation and practice should be recognised, as they are inextricably intertwined in the teaching and learning process (Lewis, 1993).

Hedge (2000) also highlights similar links between grammatical and lexical knowledge and calls for a “contextualisation of grammar” in learning materials. She believes that context is important for interpreting meaning, as we often need to attend to pragmatic aspects in which “we interpret the meanings of spoken or written language from the words spoken, the forms used, context of the discourse, and the situation in which it occurs” (p.156).

Willis (1990) points out the importance of lexis as a special feature of the English language, which he calls a “lexical language”. He believes that some grammatical structures are not clearly distinguishable from lexis, and can be learned as vocabulary. He argues that “the passive and the conditionals do not need to be presented as ‘structures’, since they are readily created by learners for themselves, provided they have an understanding of word meaning” (p.22). It is therefore advantageous to link structures with vocabulary in the learning process, as taking lexis as a starting point enables one to identify the commonest meanings and patterns in English, and to offer students a typical picture of how English is used. This tendency to merge grammar and vocabulary again highlights the intricate relationship between form, meaning and use. There is a need to maintain an appropriate balance between grammatical analysis, practice and use of the

structures in the teaching and learning of grammar. These three components are the major focuses in the examination of grammar books in this section.

The rest of this section presents the analysis of 14 grammar books selected for this survey. The selection criteria, the framework for analysis, as well as the findings will be discussed.

2.5.2 Methodology for selecting and analysing the SLA grammar books

As has been discussed earlier in this section, the grammar books are popular grammar reference and practice books for general second language learners published in recent decades. The criteria for selecting these books are presented below:

- A. The main focus is on teaching or learning grammar rather than teaching or learning English in general.
- B. They are used by general L1 and L2 learners or teachers of English at intermediate or advanced levels, for self-study or as a resource for teaching or learning English. They are not particularly targeted at Hong Kong students.
- C. They are newly published or were published in a new edition in the 1990s and 2000s.
- D. They are stocked in at least four universities in Hong Kong according to the Hong Kong Academic Library Link, a computer network Hong Kong universities use to connect their library catalogues.
- E. They include the presentation or explanation of grammatical forms or rules, and some exercises, activities and ideas for practising and producing them.

The following are the 14 grammar books selected for analysis:

1. Ackles, N. M. (2003). *The grammar guide: Developing language skills for academic success*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
2. Buttre, L. & Podnecky, J. (2005). *Grammar links 1 – 3: A theme-based course for reference and practice*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
3. Carter, R., Hughes, R. & McCarthy, M. (2000). *Exploring grammar in context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
4. Celce-Murcia, M & Larsen-Freeman, D. (1999). *The grammar book*. Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House.
5. Elbaum, S. N. (2001). *Grammar in context 1-3*. Boston: Thomas Heinle.
6. Jackson, H. (1990). *Grammar and meaning: A semantic approach to English grammar*. London & New York: Longman.
7. Jackson, H. (2002). *Grammar and vocabulary: A resource book for students*. London: Routledge.
8. Knepler, M. (1990). *Grammar with a purpose: A contextualised approach*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
9. Larsen-Freeman, D. (Ed.) (2007). *Grammar dimensions: Form, meaning and use 1 – 4*. Boston, MA.: Heinle & Heinle.
10. Lester, M. (2001). *Grammar and usage in the classroom*. Boston, Mass.: Allyn and Bacon.
11. Murphy, R. (1994). *English grammar in use*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
12. Thornbury, S (2004). *Natural grammar*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
13. Vince, M. (2007). *Macmillan English Grammar in context: Intermediate*. Oxford: Macmillan.
14. Yule, G. (2006). *Explaining English grammar*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Based on the discussion on form, meaning and use, and the relationship between grammar teaching and task-based teaching in the literature review and the foreword and introduction sections of the grammar books, a framework for analysis was developed, taking into account the extents that the books are grammar-based or form-focused on the one hand, or task-based or meaning-focused on the other. An assessment continuum was devised to assess these grammar books in five areas: grammar presentation, contextualisation, use of metalanguage, practice or production, and interest and variety. As shown in Table 2.1, each of these areas are rated on a continuum of five levels, with “grammar-based or form-focused” on one end and “task-based or meaning-focused” on the other. Level 1 on the left side represents the highest level for being grammar-based or form-focused, while level 5 on the right indicates the highest level for being task-based or meaning-focused. Levels 2 and 4 are closer to the left and the right ends respectively, while level 3 is somewhere in the middle. Table 2.1 presents more detailed descriptors of these five assessment areas.

Table 2.1 Assessment continuum for grammar books

Grammar-based/
Form-focused

Task-based/
Meaning-focused

↓

↓

Area	1	2	3	4	5	Area
A. Discrete approach						Contextualised approach
B. Grammar presentation (Deductive/Explanation)						Grammar presentation (Inductive/Use)
C. Use of metalanguage (heavy)						Use of metalanguage (light)
D. Controlled practice						Free practice
E. Interest and variety (low)						Interest and variety (high)

The whole books or sets of books were surveyed and rated for their overall tendency regarding the five assessment areas. Initial analysis of the grammar books showed that none of the books had been put under Level 5. This is perhaps due to the fact the grammar books can never be really task-based as they are basically grammar-focused if grammar is the target of learning. If the focus is on grammar, it is hard to organise and contextualise the content like common task-based textbooks, which often involve the development of various reading, writing, listening and speaking skills in using the language more authentically. To ensure consistency in rating, the grammar books were assessed two times. Discrepancies were noted in quite a number of instances between levels close to each other, such as levels 1 and 2, 2 and 3, and 3 and 4. To address this problem, it was finally decided to reduce the number of levels to four instead of five. Re-assessments showed a higher consistency in rating the books.

It should be noted that the rating was quite subjective. The distinctions between the levels were not absolute, as the four levels just represent the possible degrees of being grammar-based or task-based by comparing the 14 books with each other, and distinguishing between four levels where two of them are closer to either the left or the right end. There were discrepancies in different parts of the book for some of the books, and I had to make a decision at the end based on my own judgement of which one was the more dominant level, taking into consideration the overall tendency of the whole (set of) book(s). To minimise the possibility of inconsistent assessment, the books were re-assessed at least two or three times more, until the scores were very close between the last two assessments and I was confident that I would give similar scores even if I had to re-assess the books later. The findings from the analysis are discussed in the next section.

2.5.3 Findings from the SLA grammar books analysis

Table 2.2 summarises the results of the analysis in a continuum.

Table 2.2 Assessment summary of grammar books

Grammar-based/ Form-focused			Task-based/ Meaning-focused			
↓			↓			
Area	1	2	3	4	Aver. score	Area
A. Discrete approach	(6) (7) (10) (11) (12)	(4) (8) (13) (14)	(1) (3) (5)	(2) (9)	2.14	Contextualised approach
A. Percentage	36%	29%	21%	14%		Total: 100%
B. Grammar presentation (Deductive/Explanation)	(4) (6) (12)	(1) (10) (11) (13) (14)	(3) (5) (7) (8)	(2) (9)	2.36	Grammar presentation (Inductive/Use)
B. Percentage	21%	36%	29%	14%		Total: 100%
C. Use of meta-language (heavy)	(4) (6) (7) (10) (14)		(1) (5) (8) (11) (12) (13)	(2) (3) (9)	2.50	Use of meta-language (light)
C. Percentage	36%	0%	43%	21%		Total: 100%
D. Controlled practice	(6) (10) (11) (12)	(7) (13)	(3) (5) (14)	(1) (2) (4) (8) (9)	2.29	Free practice
D. Percentage	29%	14%	21%	36%		Total: 100%
E. Interest and variety (low)	(6) (10)	(11) (12) (7)	(1) (3) (4) (5) (13)	(2) (8) (9) (14)	2.79	Interest and variety (high)
E. Percentage	14%	21%	36%	29%		Total: 100%

Note: The circled numbers indicate the numbers of the books on the list presented on page 64.

As shown in the table, the scores are quite evenly distributed across the two ends of grammar-based and task-based features. Usually several books are put under each area of analysis. This indicates that there are different levels of grammar-based or task-based features in these books.

A more detailed discussion of the findings is presented below, according to the five aspects of analysis shown in the assessment continuum in Table 2.1: contextualisation of the material; grammar presentation; use of metalanguage; practice or production; and interest and variety. The discussion is presented under four headings below.

A. Contextualisation of the material

The average score for contextualisation of the material is 2.14. Five books are given a score of 1; four books are given a score of 2; three books are given a score of 3; and two books are given a score of 4. That means a total of nine books receive a score of either 1 or 2; and five books receive a score of either 3 or 4. More books use a discrete rather than a contextualised approach in presenting grammar.

There are varying degrees of contextualisation in the 14 books. Some of the books analyse grammatical structures using discrete phrases or sentences with little context (as shown in the sample material in Appendix 2.1, which has a score of 1). In addition to separate sentences or phrases, some books also include short dialogues or paragraphs to provide some kind of context. Books with a stronger intention to contextualise the presentation of grammar often start with a reading passage accompanied by exercises or activities that demonstrate how the forms can be used in context (as shown in the sample material in Appendix 2.2, which has a score of 3). In general, most of the books show some tendency of contextualisation, both for the presentation and practice/production of

the materials.

B. Grammar presentation and use of metalanguage

The average score for grammar presentation is 2.36. Three books are given a score of 1; five books are given a score of 2; four books are given a score of 3; and two books are given a score of 4. That means a total of eight books receive a score of either 1 or 2; and six books receive a score of either 3 or 4. There are slightly more books with a deductive than an inductive organisation.

All the grammar books contain materials at different levels for the presentation, practice and production of language forms, making use of targeted grammatical forms. They include some kind of presentation or explanation of grammatical rules or forms, and some exercises or activities for practice. A small number include some ideas or activities for less controlled production, in the forms of short speaking and writing tasks of longer than one or two sentences. Varying amounts of these materials occur in the books and they are sometimes arranged in different order, instead of adhering rigidly to the traditional sequence of presentation, practice and production.

Some of the books are organised more deductively, that is, the explanation of grammatical forms and rules precedes exercises or activities for practising them. Sometimes this deductive structure is split into sections, where shorter presentation sections alternate with more focused practice sections with exercises or activities. This may make the structure look slightly less deductive.

Other books organise the materials more inductively. They intend to help learners discover the rules through using or being exposed to the structures. They often start with some practice before the presentation or explanation of the rules. Practice may take the

forms of exercises or activities related to a short reading passage for contextualising the grammatical structures. After one or two short exercises or activities, there will be a presentation section to explain the rules or forms, followed by some more exercises or activities.

Different approaches for presenting or explaining grammatical forms and rules are adopted in the books. Some books adopt a more analytical approach with an emphasis on enhancing grammatical knowledge, especially for books targeted at language teachers or advanced learners of English. Grammatical rules or forms are explained in detail. There may even be in-depth analyses of conditions and restrictions in usage, as well as subtle nuances in meanings in context. In addition to syntactic analysis, related semantic and pragmatic features concerning meaning and appropriateness may also be explored. Heavy metalanguage may also be used. Books which put an emphasis on the explanation and analysis of grammar are considered as being more deductive in this survey. (Sample material is included in Appendix 2.3, which has a score of 1.)

On the other hand, some books put more emphasis on practice exercises and activities, incorporating little grammatical explanation and only basic grammatical terms. Books which put an emphasis on the practice or production are considered as being more inductive in this survey. Usage conditions or restrictions for grammatical structures are often shown in sample sentences, or in the context of longer texts like dialogues or paragraphs. (Sample material is included in Appendix 2.4, which has a score of 4.)

Other books maintain a balance between presentation and practice, and include some explanations although practice exercises and activities also receive attention. (Sample material is included in Appendix 2.5, which has a score of 2.)

The use of metalanguage is also associated with the level of deductiveness or inductiveness. The average score for use of metalanguage is 2.50 for all the grammar books. Five books are given a score of 1; no book is given a score of 2; six books are given a score of 3; and three books are given a score of 4. That means a total of five books receive a score of either 1 or 2; and nine books receive a score of either 3 or 4. More books use lighter rather than heavier metalanguage.

It should be noted that books which are more deductive and put more emphasis on grammatical analysis also tend to use heavier metalanguage while the more inductive books with an emphasis on practice or production tend to use lighter metalanguage.

C. Practice or production

The average score for practice or production is 2.29. Four books are given a score of 1; two books are given a score of 2; three books are given a score of 3; and five books are given a score of 4. That means a total of six books receive a score of either 1 or 2; and eight books receive a score of either 3 or 4. Slightly more books include some free practice compared to those using only controlled practice.

It should be noted that “free” practice here means the type of slightly more authentic practice which can probably feature in grammar books. Practice is often more controlled in grammar books compared to general task-based textbooks. The opportunity for extended speaking or writing is lower in grammar books, as the structures need to be highly controlled. In this survey, books with a score of 4 in free practice do not really indicate highly authentic practice according to general task-based standards, they only include some short speaking or writing tasks of a paragraph or a little longer.

Different types of grammar exercises and activities are used, ranging from short objective

exercises to less controlled activities, such as cloze, multiple choice, matching, listing, sentence correction or transformation, and comparatively less controlled oral or short speaking or writing tasks that require more authentic production of language.

These materials can also be divided into three main types. Some of these aim to enhance grammatical knowledge. Some focus on practising the forms, while others put more emphasis on using the forms appropriately in comparatively more meaningful contexts. Different degrees of discrete item exercises or more contextualised activities may be used for these three purposes.

To some extent, some of the activities that provide practice for enhancing grammatical knowledge look similar to Ellis (2003) and Fotos' (1991; 1993) grammatical consciousness-raising tasks where grammatical knowledge is the purpose of practice or communication. Some of these take the form of objective discrete item exercises such as error correction or grammaticality judgement exercises. Some practice exercises may require learners to give decontextualised grammatical explanations of forms or conditions or restrictions in usage. (Sample material is included in Appendix 2.6, with a score of 1.) More contextualised practice may require learners to identify certain grammatical structures or rules from short reading passages or dialogues. (Sample material is included in Appendix 2.7, with a score of 3.) These practice exercises are fairly controlled in general.

The more traditional type of form-focused practice mostly includes discrete item exercises which drill learners in repeating the forms in controlled situations. Sometimes learners may need to use the forms to complete more contextualised texts such as short passages or dialogues. (Sample material is included in Appendix 2.8, with a score of 2.) There are also more contextualised activities which put more emphasis on using the forms

appropriately in given contexts. (Sample material is included in Appendix 2.9, with a score of 4.)

Another type of practice allows for the less controlled and more authentic production of language, ranging from the production of a few sentences to more extended tasks. Activities which require longer and more authentic production are often included in books targeted at more advanced learners. (Sample material is included in Appendix 2.10, with a score of 4.)

D. Interest and variety

The average score for interest and variety is 2.79, the highest of the five areas being investigated. Two books are given a score of 1; three books are given a score of 2; five books are given a score of 3; and four books are given a score of 4. That means a total of five books receive a score of either 1 or 2; and nine books receive a score of either 3 or 4. More books seem to put an emphasis on interest and variety compared to those which do not.

The grammar books show different levels of interest and variety in the types of grammatical analysis as well as exercises and activities. Some of the books are also more visually attractive in design and layout than the others, making more frequent use of graphics or pictures, tables or charts to enhance interest. There also seems to be a tendency for more inductive and contextualised materials to demonstrate a higher level of interest and variety.

In brief, a range of materials for presenting and practising grammar can be found in these grammar books. They may be organised deductively or inductively, or presented in contextualised or decontextualised ways; they may emphasise grammatical analysis or

practice which is highly controlled or allows for some authentic production. There is also a tendency for some of the books to include a variety of materials and activities which are more visually appealing to enhance interest. The five areas of analysis also show similar tendencies in terms of being grammar-based or task-based.

Although the most grammar-based books tend to remain deductive and decontextualised with little interest and variety in presentation and little scope for free production the language, there seems to be an increasing tendency for some of the grammar books to adopt a more inductive and contextualised approach, with lighter use of metalanguage and more scope for comparatively more authentic practice, and there is a greater effort to include a wider variety of more interesting materials. In fact, there is a clear influence of the task-based approach, although these books mainly focus on grammar.

The influence can also be demonstrated by comparing the old and new editions of the grammar books which have published more than one edition. The two sets of books, *Grammar Links* and *Grammar Dimensions*, both published their first edition in 2000 and second edition in 2005 and 2007 respectively. A comparison of the two editions show a tendency for the latest editions of both sets of books to be more task-based than grammar-based according to the assessment continuum compared to the previous edition. Although the overall structures of the books remain quite similar in terms of contextualisation, grammar presentation and use of metalanguage, there is a clear tendency for the latest editions to have a stronger task-based orientation in terms of the areas of practice, interest and variety of the materials. Both sets of books include practice/activities for more authentic language production such as paragraph/dialogue writing based on a given context/situation. The latest editions also include a variety of graphics and improved layout to support explanations, practice exercises and activities. This helps them look more contextualised.

This relationship between the task-based and grammar-based approach in the grammar teaching materials will be examined further in the more specific context of Hong Kong in the next two chapters,

2.6 Chapter summary

This chapter reviews the literature on controversial issues of grammar teaching regarding whether grammar should be taught and how it should be taught in second language teaching. In particular, it presents and reviews research and arguments on various ways of focusing on form in CLT and TBLT, which are primarily meaning-focused teaching approaches.

Research on second language teaching in recent years has shown that the importance of grammar has never diminished over the past two decades, although communicative and task-based approaches have been practised in general. A variety of methods had been proposed to induce a focus on form within a meaning-paramount teaching approach. In the recent decades, there has been a tendency not to consider meaning and form as dichotomous and distinct concepts, but as complementary or even embedded concepts in second language teaching. Various attempts have been made to resolve the uncomfortable relationship between form and meaning by inducing a focus on form at different stages of TBLT, whether through monitoring the language input, the interactional process or the language production.

The attempt to accommodate the seemingly conflicting demands of form and meaning has resulted in the development of more flexible and eclectic approaches in teaching grammar in TBLT. Research has been undertaken concerning how the traditional PPP

approach has been adapted for use in the task-based classrooms. Similarly, the recent pedagogical grammar teaching and learning materials have also demonstrated some tendency to attend to meaning and context, instead of being entirely form-focused.

The different interpretations of TBLT and various approaches of integrating grammar teaching into TBLT may have implications for policy and teaching implementation. To contextualise further investigations of how curriculum ideas on grammar teaching are perceived and implemented in Hong Kong classrooms, the next chapter will review the literature concerning teachers' role in curriculum implementation, and examine the grammar teaching environment in light of the local educational and language teaching developments in recent years.

Chapter 3 Teachers' role in curriculum implementation

3.1 Introduction

To provide a context for examining how grammar teaching is implemented within the task-based English Language curriculum of Hong Kong, this chapter first reviews the literature concerning teachers' role in curriculum implementation, firstly in major areas related to teacher cognition in the general SLA context; then similar research in Hong Kong is also examined.

The ways teachers implement the curriculum and practise teaching in the classroom are also influenced by contextual factors in the educational environment in which they work. Therefore, the chapter also examines recent educational developments in Hong Kong that may impact on grammar teaching. This provides a context for exploring how curriculum ideas are interpreted in teaching materials and implemented by individual teachers in the classroom, which are the focuses of investigation in the next three chapters.

3.2 Teachers' role in curriculum implementation

Teachers have often been considered as one of the most important agents in curriculum implementation, innovation and development. Theorists and researchers have commented on the role of teachers in these aspects. White (1988, p.116) believes that "an educational organisation is operated by the persons who are themselves the instruments of change. Without their willingness and participation, there will be no change". These agents of change may be responsible "to initiate the innovation and to assist its adoption" by participating in the various stages of innovations before the changes are adopted.

The teachers' role in curriculum implementation is especially important when there are indeterminate elements in the curriculum, such as in the task-based curriculum. Discussing from a diffusion of innovations perspective, Markee (1997) identifies the key issue facing task-based language teaching as its relative newness on the language teaching scene. This makes the implementation of the approach prone to the untested impact of the various attributes of innovations which may have an effect on its eventual adoption or rejection, such as the form, observability, adaptability, originality, trialability, complexity, feasibility and explicitness of innovations. The task-based approach is constantly evolving. Researchers have different definitions and concepts about its specific contents, just as Markee (1997) suggests, "communicative language teaching has no single monolithic identity, no one version of task-based language teaching has gained widespread acceptance" (p.35). For a teaching approach without a definite shape, the implementation of the curriculum will be even more controversial.

TBLT can no longer be considered as a new approach now, after being quite commonly used for nearly two decades in different locations where English is taught as a second or foreign language. However, because of the nature of this teaching approach, TBLT is prone to different strategies of implementation. As is suggested by Nunan (1989) one of the early proponents of the task-based approach, "with the development of communicative language teaching, the separation of syllabus design and methodology becomes increasingly problematical" (p.1). Breen and Candlin (2001), also stress this process-oriented nature of the communicative curriculum as one which places content within methodology, where content plays a subservient role to the teaching and learning process. Thus, teaching content is often not prescribed by purposes but selected and organised within the communicative process by learners and teachers who are participants in that process. This idea of the fusion of curriculum content and teaching

methodology is highlighted again by Ellis (2003) in his discussion of inducing a focus on form in TBLT through both the task design and methodological procedures. Teaching content and methodology are often mutually embedded instead of distinctively separated in TBLT.

Largely due to this indefinite shape of the task-based curriculum, how teachers actually practise teaching the task-based approach and how they integrate the teaching of grammar into the approach can be quite undecided, subject to the influence of a number of factors related to teachers' concepts, perceptions and beliefs, as well as the constraints they need to face in their teaching practice.

A number of researchers have put forward various theories concerning the constituents of teachers' cognitive processes and their relationship to how teachers make decisions in their teaching practice. One major theoretical framework has been proposed by Richards, Ho, and Giblin (1996), who describe the decision-making process in language teaching as consisting of four constituents: knowledge, awareness, beliefs and skills. These are comparable to the constituents of teachers' belief systems which Richards (1998) describes later: "the information, attitudes, values, expectations, theories, and assumptions about teaching and learning" (p.66).

Freeman (1989) suggests that language teaching can be seen as a decision-making process based on four constituents: knowledge, skills, attitude, and awareness. He gives a detailed description of these constituents. According to his description, "knowledge" is "what is being taught (the subject matter); to whom it is being taught (the students); and where it is being taught (the sociocultural, institutional, and situational contexts)" (p.31). "Skills" are "what the teacher has to be able to do: present material, give clear instructions, correct errors in various ways, manage classroom interaction and discipline,

and so on” (p.31). He further defines “attitude” as “the stance one adopts towards oneself, the activity of teaching, and the learners one engages in the teaching/learning process, and the interplay of externally-oriented behaviour, actions and perception on the one hand, and internal intrapersonal dynamics, feelings and reactions on the other” (p.32). The fourth constituent, “awareness”, he suggests, “functions as the unifying superordinate within the model”. It is “the capacity to recognise and monitor the attention one is giving or had given to something. Thus, one acts on or responds to the aspects of a situation of which one is aware” (p.33).

Borg (1999) describes “teachers’ theories” as one of the major constituents of teachers’ knowledge having a powerful influence on teachers’ instructional decisions. According to Borg, these theories often consist of “implicit personal understandings of teaching and learning which teachers develop through educational and professional experiences in their lives” (p.157). This description seems to be equally or partially applicable to other terminologies for describing the constituents of teachers’ cognitive framework, such as “teachers’ beliefs”, “teachers’ personal theories”, “teacher knowledge”. These various concepts related to teachers’ thinking processes often overlap in meaning. It is difficult to make a clear distinction between some of these concepts as mental activities are often conflated. To avoid conceptual confusion, they can be considered under a more inclusive term, “teacher cognition”.

The following sections will examine two main bodies of research that have been conducted on teacher cognition. The first type is on teachers’ beliefs and teaching practice. The second type is on teachers’ skills and knowledge.

3.2.1 Teachers' pedagogical beliefs

The relationship between language teachers' beliefs and the ways that teachers respond to different situations has been discussed by Woods (1996), who asserts that "teachers 'interpret' a teaching situation in the light of their beliefs about the learning and teaching of what they consider a second language to consist of; the result of this interpretation is what the teacher plans for and attempts to create in the classroom" (p.69). The different aspects of teachers' belief systems are explored in various studies and some of these are presented below.

How teachers teach in their classes very often depends on the beliefs they hold about language teaching and effective teaching in general. A number of studies have explored this relationship between teachers' beliefs and classroom practices. In one study, Burns (1996) examined the nature and processes of language teaching as they are viewed by a teacher. She aimed to explore the notion that what teachers do is affected by what they think and the kinds of pedagogical beliefs that they hold. Six experienced teachers working with beginning adult language learners who were newly arrived immigrants to Australia participated in the study. An ethnographic and interpretative approach was adopted, making use of data collected from audio-recorded classroom observations and ethnographic interviews. An analysis of data shows that the teachers' thinking cohered around interconnecting and interacting "contextual" levels. At the broadest level was an institutional focus. The second contextual level involved the personal philosophies, thinking, attitudes, beliefs and expectations that the teacher had developed about language, learning and learners. At the third and most specific level were their thinking and reflections on the specific forms of instruction that occurred, or decisions that were made before or after the instructional process. Results indicate that interconnecting networks of beliefs appear to be foundational to classroom operations. The underlying

thinking and beliefs the teacher brings to the classroom shape the processes and interactions that occur in different ways.

Other studies which explore the relationship between teachers' beliefs and classroom practices show that teachers' beliefs have an important influence on their classroom practices. Instructional decisions and practices often reflect their beliefs. Woods (1991) carried out a longitudinal study of two teachers with different theoretical orientations who taught the same ESL course in a Canadian university. One teacher had a "curriculum-based" view of teaching and the other a "student-based" view. Woods found that there was strong evidence that: (1) the decisions made in planning and carrying out the course were internally consistent, and consistent with deeper underlying assumptions and beliefs about language, learning and teaching; yet (2) each teacher's decisions and beliefs differed dramatically from the other along a number of specifiable dimensions. The study indicates the strong impact of teachers' individual beliefs on the way they plan and conduct their lessons, and some of these are unique to particular teachers and not generalisable.

Some of the studies have shown that what teachers practise in the classroom is not always compatible with their beliefs in teaching. The study by Choi (2000) investigated from the teachers' perspectives the practice of communicative language teaching in Korean middle school English classrooms as a foreign language. The purpose of this descriptive survey research was to explore Korean English teachers' beliefs about communicative language teaching (CLT) and their beliefs about the main objectives of English teaching as well as teachers' practices of CLT in classroom instruction. The result of the study showed that Korean EFL teachers had positive beliefs about the concepts of communicative language teaching, but it was reported that there were some discrepancies between their beliefs about CLT and their practices of CLT in classroom instruction. The Korean English

teachers supported the concepts of CLT such as (1) to develop communicative classroom environments that blend the language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, (2) to provide appropriate, meaningful and comprehensible input to learners, (3) to use motivational activities such as games and songs, (4) to use audio-visual materials in language classrooms, (5) to use learner-centred activities and (6) to teach grammar in a communicative way. However, they reported that their teaching practices in classroom instruction were still largely teacher-centred, teacher-dominated and drill-driven rather than learner-centred.

A minority of the studies have shown that teachers sometimes do not practise their beliefs in the classroom because of various contextual factors they need to cope with in conducting their lessons. Duffy and Anderson (1986) studied eight reading teachers and found that only four of them consistently employed practices that directly reflected their beliefs. Factors cited as likely to prevent teachers from teaching according to their beliefs include the need to follow a prescribed curriculum, lack of suitable resources and students' ability levels. Another study by Hoffman and Kugle (1982) also found no significant relationship between teachers' beliefs about reading and the kinds of verbal feedback they gave during reading lessons.

Yim (1993) likewise found in studying ESL teachers in Singapore that while they were able to articulate beliefs about the role of grammar teaching from a communicative orientation, these beliefs were not evident in their classroom practices, which were driven more by exam-based, structured grammar activities of a non-communicative kind.

These studies show that constraints in the teaching environment often prevent teachers from practising what they believe, and even their most ardent beliefs concerning their subjects may be eroded by situational factors.

3.2.2 Teachers' knowledge and skills

Another type of research investigates teachers' knowledge and skills in relation to teachers' beliefs. Based on the earlier discussions by Shulman (1987) and Johnston (1990), Richards (1998) distinguishes between two dimensions of teacher knowledge in relation to the different types of conceptual organisation and meaning that they employ. One level of meaning relates to subject matter knowledge and how curricular and content aspects of teaching are conceptualised. In addition to the curricular goals and content, teachers have other more personal views of teaching.

One constituent of teacher knowledge is teaching skills, or what Shulman (1987, as cited in Richards, 1998) terms "instruction", which, according to Richards (1998), refers to those generic dimensions of teaching regarded as essential to the repertoire of any teacher, regardless of subject; in addition to these, language teachers also need to acquire additional teaching skills that are specific to language teaching.

Richards (1998) also believes that as teachers develop in their skills, awareness, and knowledge, they move from a level of what has been termed "technical rationality" (Putorak 1993, as cited in Richards, 1998), where the focus is on mastery of basic teaching techniques and skills (i.e. classroom competency), to a level that has been called "critical reflection", where teaching is guided by the teacher's personal theory and philosophy of teaching, and is constantly renewed by critical reflection and self-assessment.

A number of studies have been conducted in recent years on teacher knowledge to fill a research gap pointed out by Borg (2001), who draws our attention to the insufficient

research on a specific area of investigation which deserves more attention, that is, teachers' perceptions of their "knowledge about grammar" (KAG): "In the ELT literature, despite growing interest in teacher cognition (e.g. Woods, 1996), there has been little attempt to explore the relationship between teachers' perceptions of their KAG and their instructional decisions" (p.21-22).

Borg conducted a number of studies on teachers' perceptions in relation to grammar teaching, one of which was on five teachers of English as a foreign language in Malta (Borg, 1999). He observed their classes and interviewed the teachers about their grammar teaching practices. Results indicated that their decisions on whether to practise formal instruction and how to practise formal instruction were not just influenced by the traditional theories they acquired in ELT concerning the importance of formal instruction in language teaching and the contribution it made to develop students' ability to use the language for communication. Instead, the instructional practices were influenced by a set of interacting thoughts about pedagogical ideals, instructional content, student needs and preferences, and instructional context.

Another study conducted by Borg (2001) explores the relationship between teachers' perceptions of their knowledge about grammar and their instructional practices. In the study, he compared the teaching style of two teachers and found that teachers with different perceptions of their knowledge displayed strikingly different teaching behaviours. He concluded that when the teachers have more confidence in their own subject knowledge, they tended to be more interactive and learner-centred, but when they have less confidence, they became more didactic and teacher-centred.

Borg's research effort on teachers' knowledge of grammar and perceptions about grammar teaching has been sustained in a few studies in the local context of Hong Kong.

These will be reviewed in the next section.

3.2.3 Research on teacher cognition and curriculum implementation in Hong Kong

A number of studies in Hong Kong have been conducted on the nature of teachers' beliefs. For example, in a questionnaire study of the beliefs of English teachers in Hong Kong schools, Richards, Tung and Ng (1992) found that the 246 teachers sampled held a relatively consistent set of beliefs relating to such issues as the nature of the ESL curriculum in Hong Kong, the role of English in society, differences between English and Chinese, the relevance of theory to practice, the role of textbooks and their own role in the classroom.

Another study by Richards, Ho and Gibling (1996) illustrated the ways in which teachers' personal theories influence their perception and evaluation of their own teaching. The study was conducted on a group of five novice teachers completing an introductory teacher preparation programme in Hong Kong. The study aimed to examine how the teachers responded to the practice teaching experiences provided in the programme, which aspects of teaching they found problematic, and how their ideas and beliefs about teaching developed during the programme. Results indicated that there were individual differences in the way the five teachers planned, monitored and described their own teaching. This suggested different ways in which they conceptualised teaching. Richards et al. (1996) describes these differences as three different teaching perspectives: the teacher-centred perspective, in which the teacher is seen as the primary focus of teaching; the curriculum-centred perspective, in which the lesson as an instructional unit is the primary focus; and the learner-centred perspective, in which the learners are the primary focus.

Pennington (1996) studied the change of attitude of eight secondary teacher volunteers attending a part-time evening master of arts programme in teaching English as a second language in the English Department at the City Polytechnic of Hong Kong [now renamed the "City University of Hong Kong"]. They participated in a project which aimed to provide the native Cantonese-speaking English teachers working in Hong Kong secondary schools with the necessary background and support to apply a process approach to writing. Various types of input were provided beginning in August 1992 in four-hour programmes of two initial training sessions and five monthly follow-up meetings. A questionnaire was given to participating teachers to assess the value of the forms of input they were exposed to during the training and try-out phases of the project. Results indicated that the teachers changed in attitude towards the implementation of the process-writing approach only in those areas where they were already primed to change, and this priming depended on their individual characteristics and prior experiences, which shaped their view of their classrooms, their students, and themselves as teachers. Drawing on the distinction between input and intake first proposed by Corder (1967, 1971) and later developed by Krashen (1981, 1982), Pennington (1996) suggests that in teacher training, input does not equal intake. She concludes the study by affirming that attempts to influence teachers' behaviour will have an impact only in areas where the input is valued and salient to the individual, and where it is congruent with, and interpretable within, the teachers' own world of thought and action.

A study on Hong Kong secondary school ESL teachers by Lee (1996) revealed a gap between their beliefs and practices regarding writing. Although most teachers thought discourse coherence was essential to writing instruction, they appeared to attend primarily to grammar in their evaluation of students' writing and in their own teaching.

In another study conducted by Tsui (2003), the cognitive processes of four ESL teachers

in Hong Kong were closely examined in relation to their different teaching contexts. The purpose was to investigate how teachers develop their expertise in teaching. To explore this topic, a series of lesson observations and interviews were conducted on the four secondary teachers. Curriculum materials including teaching plans, teaching materials and students' work were also examined. In particular, the way that teacher knowledge impacted on teaching practice received attention in the study. This was explored in the context of grammar teaching, as an important area in the enactment of the ESL curriculum. Results indicate that the teachers' grammar teaching approaches depended not only on their beliefs about the importance of grammar and how it should be taught, but also on their knowledge about grammar. Qualitative differences were found between one of the three teachers, whom Tsui described as an expert teacher, and the other three teachers. Compared to the other three teachers, the expert teacher had much richer, more elaborate and more coherent pedagogical content knowledge. She saw ESL teaching not as the teaching of discrete skills but as an arena for integrating various skills in using language for communicative purposes. Her ESL teaching was effectively integrated into specific contexts, and she was also able to perceive and exploit various possibilities for teaching and learning. She could also clearly articulate her principles and criteria for forming curricular judgement, and could make conscious curricular decisions based on these. She was also better able to internalise these principles and criteria and realise them in her teaching practice.

There have been a number of studies in Hong Kong on teachers' perceptions of TBLT and the implementation of the task-based approach in the recent decades. Before the formal implementation of the task-based research, there were some studies related to the Target-Oriented Curriculum (TOC), which was implemented in primary schools in the mid-1990s and abandoned after a few years. As the TOC endorses quite similar basic pedagogical principles, it can be considered as the predecessor of TBLT in Hong Kong.

The study by Suchs et al. (1994) reports the interpretations that school teachers made when they were asked to develop teaching plans for given tasks during the three-day introductory seminars to TOC conducted from September 1992 to July 1993. Results indicated that they had a tacit understanding of how to develop and adapt tasks. They were also able to exercise judgement in making decisions to change the procedures and content of the tasks. Teachers, however, identified classroom management and giving adequate language support to pupils as major sources of difficulty. The results also showed areas of differences between secondary and primary teachers. In particular, there was a disparity between what the primary teachers knew and desired and what they actually practised. Although the majority of the primary teachers recognised the intrinsic teaching value of the tasks they worked on, they asserted that they usually taught their lessons in a different way from what they did in this study. Most of the secondary participants, on the other hand, indicated quite similar practice for their other lessons. Primary teachers also differed from secondary teachers in their self-perceptions on decision-making and knowledge. The former refers to their decisions on how and what to teach and the amount of homework, while the latter refers to how much they know about different topics concerning second language or task-based teaching. Statistical analyses showed that there was a correlation between the teachers' self-perceptions on decision-making and knowledge and whether they practised task-based teaching. The difference between primary and secondary teachers could possibly be related to the fact that secondary teachers have higher educational qualifications, although further research is necessary for establishing a clear relationship. Generally, the results of the study point to a need for upgrading teachers' qualifications and feelings of efficacy within the profession. More seminars and resources are also needed to support teacher development in task-based teaching.

In a later study, Carless (1998) described and analysed the perceptions and reactions of a well-qualified, positively oriented primary school English teacher to Hong Kong's TOC initiative. The analysis encompassed teacher attitudes, teacher training and support, teachers' understanding of an innovation, teacher reflection and development, the role of the principal in facilitating innovation, and the management of change. In a later paper, Carless (1999) tries to explain the reasons behind the failure of the TOC. He suggests that there is a "mismatch between relevant features of East Asian cultures and learner-centred, process-oriented curricula derived from the West" (p.239). Having much in common with process-oriented, communicative or task-based approaches, TOC is not easy to implement in the classroom. The western models need to be adapted to suit local situations. What was actually implemented was more like a weak form of the communicative approach, in which a PPP approach was predominantly used and learning tasks characteristically occurred in the production stage of this sequence. This approach seems to permit a high degree of teacher control in the presentation and practice stages, and some opportunity for more active pupil participation in the production stage. Carless also suggests that "large class sizes, heavy workloads and generally poorly resourced working conditions may prevent or discourage teachers from paying more than lip-service to the notion of individual differences" (p.247), which is one of the main issues the TOC aims to tackle.

Another study by Lee (2002) explored three English secondary teachers' conceptions of task-based learning through in-depth interviews. Results indicated that teachers perceived various levels of the weak, medium and strong forms of TBL at various levels, with the more experienced teachers showing a tendency to favour stronger versions of TBL than the less experienced one. The findings also showed that teachers tended to adopt the approach that was close to their own learning experience.

Hui (2004) conducted a questionnaire survey of 50 teachers from nine secondary schools in Hong Kong, supplemented by lesson observations and interviews with 2 teachers. Findings implied that the teachers' knowledge of TBLT was inadequate. Their perceptions of the implementation of TBLT were mixed with both positive and negative opinions. Despite perceiving a number of limitations and constraints in implementing TBLT in classrooms, teachers could still comprehend the benefits of this approach. However, they did not strongly believe that it could enhance effectiveness in teaching and learning. There were also indications of a mismatch between perceptions and teaching practice.

A few studies have also been conducted on the implementation of TBLT in primary and secondary schools. The study by Chan (2006) focused on the enactment of TBLT in primary classrooms at two stages: task design and task implementation. This study attempted to determine whether there were qualitative differences between four primary ESL teachers when they enacted TBLT and how they afforded different learning experiences. The study showed that there were six dimensions on which two teachers, who seemed to be more effective in enacting task-based teaching in their classrooms, differed from the other two teachers who seemed to be less effective. The findings seem to suggest that what is most important in TBLT is that it is not the task *per se* that shapes learning in the classroom, but the ways in which the teachers as well as the learners orient to the task that finally determines the kind of learning that has taken place.

The study by Mak (2004) investigated the implementation and conceptual understanding of task-based learning of four junior secondary English teachers. A number of key elements in task-based learning were identified for analysis, including the presence of product, context, communicative activities, authenticity, integration of skills, as well as

the teacher's role in identifying learners' needs and adapting tasks, monitoring activities and teaching grammar. Her study also aimed to explore how faithful English teachers were in response to the Curriculum Development Council's call for innovation implementation by comparing and contrasting the implemented Task-based Learning curriculum in junior secondary English Language classrooms and the intended curriculum - the English Language Syllabus 1999. The findings show that the implemented curriculum tended to conform more to teachers' conceptual understanding than the features recommended in the intended curriculum. It signifies that teachers are the key figures determining how far an innovation can be implemented as officially planned.

The implementation and management of the TBL innovation was investigated again by Tong (2005), who conducted an in-depth case study on three secondary schools. Her study showed that TBL is indeed implemented by teachers in ways that diverge significantly from the intended curriculum, due to factors such as washback from public examinations; poor teacher education and support for the innovation; and problems of discipline and student motivation. More importantly, it was clear that there was a leadership vacuum in schools, as the senior management demonstrated little understanding of how to effectively support and manage innovation. Except in isolated instances, TBL as an innovation either withered or became diffuse in most cases.

The above studies indicate that there are various factors which may impact on how teachers perceive and implement TBLT in their classrooms. They also indicate that the teacher's role is central in curriculum implementation. A few more studies which focus on grammar teaching have also been conducted in recent years. The study by Mai (2003) examined three secondary teachers' beliefs about grammar teaching and the way they taught grammar in implementing the 1999 task-based curriculum. It was found that all

three teachers believed that grammar plays an important role in English language teaching in Hong Kong though different reasons were found to underpin these beliefs. They also had different interpretations of grammar teaching in the task-based approach although they all believed that they were already adopting such grammar pedagogy. The researcher found that teacher B was handling grammar in a way that was the most compatible with the task-based approach. Teacher C was somewhere in the middle of the continuum and teacher A was rather deviant from the norm. The findings give insight into a deeper understanding of teachers' beliefs about the practice of grammar pedagogy and demonstrate that the new approach to grammar teaching poses a potential challenge to teachers' existing beliefs and practice.

While Mai's study focused more on teaching pedagogy, the study by Wu (2006) put more emphasis on teacher cognition behind their practices. Her study investigated the beliefs and classroom practices in grammar teaching of four ESL teachers in Hong Kong using the case study methodology. A key finding revealed that as the teachers varied in terms of professional training, and teaching and learning experiences, each espoused a unique system of beliefs, some of which were in conflict with those of the others. The teachers were not simultaneously aware of all of their beliefs, and some beliefs came to the fore of their awareness while others receded into the background. As the beliefs of the four teachers exhibited differences, their classroom practices also diverged. In teaching grammar, some teachers favoured form-focused activities, while others preferred more meaning-oriented activities. The differences may lead to very different learning experiences for the students.

These locally-based studies in Hong Kong focus on either the implementation of TBLT or grammar teaching. None has discussed the relationship between the two in depth. In exploring teachers' concepts or beliefs, emphasis is often placed on the immediate

environment that impact on teachers' views, that is, the school in which they work. Little has been done to trace the impact of wider contexts on teachers' perceptions and practice and how concepts are transmitted from different channels before they impact on the teachers. These are the gaps that this study aims to address.

To contextualise the data analysis and discussion of the present study on the teaching concepts and practice behind the implementation of grammar teaching within the TBLT curriculum, the next section of this chapter will explore the wider educational contexts that the teachers work in. One of the major contributive factors is the recent educational developments in Hong Kong.

3.3 Grammar teaching and educational developments in Hong Kong

The English language teaching approaches in Hong Kong have often been highly influenced by major developments in second language teaching and learning theories and approaches. Grammar teaching within the English language curriculum has also made corresponding adjustments. The implementation of the 1983 communicative curriculum relegated grammar to a less important position in the 1980s and early 1990s. After over a decade of neglecting grammar, people began to attribute the falling English standards to this development. Renewed attention to grammar started to develop in the 1990s, culminating in the overt emphasis on grammar in the task-based curriculum of 1999.

Alongside these developments, the political handover of Hong Kong to China in 1997 also raised concerns about the changing role of English in Hong Kong and its subsequent impact on English language education. The 2000s have also shown marked efforts to reform the curriculum to suit a changing Hong Kong. These may impact on the role and content of English language education, which may subsequently influence teaching

concepts and approaches.

This section traces the educational developments in recent years which may have an impact on English language teaching and the teaching of grammar. Data in this section are drawn mainly from locally based research on English language education in Hong Kong as well as articles from an English newspaper, the *South China Morning Post* (SCMP), which show the wider views of society on the topic, and trace the implementation of the education reform initiatives. The newspaper was chosen because it is the only English newspaper available on the market², and it is well-known for its comprehensive and objective coverage of current issues. The articles used from the newspaper include editorials, letters to the editor, and articles or reports written by reporters or educational practitioners.

3.3.1 The role of the English language

As Hong Kong entered a new era with the handover of sovereignty to China in 1997, it was expected that the role of English would see a shift in prominence. As Hong Kong was a British colony and most of its people are ethnically Chinese, Chinese and English were both official languages before 1997. Cantonese and English were the predominant languages for spoken communication, whilst the sphere of official written communication was shared by Mandarin Chinese (or Putonghua) and English.

The situation after 1997 has not changed too much. Chinese and English both remain the official languages of the post-1997 era. Neither has declined in importance. However, there is a rising need to reassert the status of the Chinese language and to reinstate the

² Originally Hong Kong had two newspapers for sale. Aside from the *South China Morning Post*, there was also the *Hong Kong Standard*. However, the latter stopped publishing in the mid-2000s. At present *South China Morning Post* is the only English newspaper for sale on the market with a price, although a free English newspaper, *The Standard*, started to operate from 2007.

Chinese mother tongue as the medium of instruction in education, now that the English medium does not seem necessary with the end of the colonial era. However, the intricate relationship between English and Chinese is full of ingrained values and attitudes and it is not a simple issue to resolve. As suggested by Asker (1998), “Hong Kong is now faced with complex pressures to accommodate an increasing need for Putonghua (as a political as well as linguistic construct) and to preserve the role of English as the language of global commerce” (p.1-2).

The changing social, economic and political situations have brought about a change in the power relations of the two major languages of Hong Kong, English and Chinese. With the completion of the handover and the development of closer political and economic ties between Hong Kong and mainland China, there is inevitably a strong demand for Putonghua in Hong Kong. Hong Kong seems to have coped well in this respect. In response to recommendations in one of the Education Commission reports, Putonghua teaching has been gradually strengthened in schools. It is now incorporated as a mandatory component of the formal school curricula for both the primary and secondary levels, with enhanced government funding and support. In fact, schools have been encouraged to adopt Putonghua as their medium of instruction for Chinese subjects in secondary schools and a minority of the schools have already done so or are moving in that direction. (*SCMP*, November 13 2007; October 30 2007). These developments regarding Putonghua seem to have evolved without too much opposition and controversy.

It is in the area of attempting to change the medium of instruction (MOI) in secondary schools from English to Chinese that heated debates arose. In 1996, the Education Commission Report (ECR) No. 6 recommended that the implementation of the policy of mother tongue teaching as expounded in ECR No. 4 be given extra impetus by the Education Department, which should publish its advice on the appropriate medium of

instructions in 1997 for adoption by individual schools in 1998, giving clear indications on sanctions for non-compliance (Asker, 1998). However, when the Education Department (renamed Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) in 2000, and the Education Bureau (EDB) in 2007) attempted to implement the MOI policy and put pressure on schools which could not fulfill the English language standard requirement to adopt Chinese as the MOI, it was faced with strong opposition from both the schools and society. Although Hong Kong is no longer a British colony, the value that the Hong Kong people place on the English language has never changed. As an international language, English will continue to offer economic gain and career success to those who can use it proficiently. This is what the stakeholders of Hong Kong's school system, such as students, parents, teachers and prospective employers consider to be the most important issue. Although CMI schools (schools using Chinese as the medium of instruction) would receive greater government subsidies to support their English language teaching, there were fears that the abandonment of English as the MOI would pull down language standards and hinder schools from enrolling higher ability students, which would in turn result in lower school banding and a vicious circle of continuously falling standards. There were voices in society which advocated giving schools their own choice of MOI, or allowing them to continue teaching in mixed mode (*SCMP*, December 14 1997, December 17 1997, March 27 1998, November 12 1999).

It was against this background of uncertainty and controversy that the MOI policy was implemented in 1998, with only slight adjustments. The majority of Hong Kong secondary schools had to adopt Chinese as their medium of instruction, while only a relatively smaller number of schools were allowed to use English. Debates concerning the policy have never abated in the past decade. CMI schools have often complained about the unfair disadvantage they have to face in enrolling students of higher academic ability. The fall in the English results in public examinations has also been used as a testimony for

the negative impact of the MOI policy.

At around the same time, the release of a research report on the impact of the MOI policy also received much attention in society. The results of the study released by Tsang Wing-kwong, Professor of Education at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (as reported in *SCMP*, March 1, 2008; March 15, 2008; March 17, 2008) show that the mother-tongue education policy is not helping students gain entrance to university. The study tracked the performance of 37,277 students who entered Form One in 1998 and 1999 until they finished their A-levels in 2005 and 2006. Results indicated that students who studied in Chinese-medium schools displayed almost no academic advantage compared to students educated in English. Only about 30 per cent of students educated in a Chinese-language milieu were likely to gain university admission. Students in Chinese-medium schools initially scored better in subjects like the sciences and social studies, but the gap narrowed as they progressed to their A-level studies. Also, students from CMI schools were clearly disadvantaged in English compared to those who had more exposure to English earlier during their secondary school careers, since a pass in A-level English was a major requirement for university admission.

The release of the study findings refueled the ingrained dissatisfaction towards the MOI policy. Debates about whether the Chinese medium policy should continue re-emerged with renewed energy (*SCMP*, March 27, June 7a 2008). By June 2008, the government finally agreed to “fine-tune” the policy to cater to the needs of the majority of secondary schools. To remove the rigid distinction between English-medium and Chinese-medium schools, all schools would henceforth be given flexibility to decide their teaching language for some subjects for up to 25 per cent of their classes (*SCMP*, June 7b, June 28 2008). Although a more long-term policy still needs to be proposed, this move has achieved the purpose of dampening dissatisfaction and controversy.

Discussion regarding the MOI re-emerged near the end of 2009, when schools adopting a mixed mode of EMI and CMI subjects released the number of subjects and classes that they would offer in English in the following academic year in September 2010. Sixteen schools which had been teaching in Chinese would switch to teaching entirely in English. Another 80 would adopt a mixed approach - using Chinese for humanities subjects and English for science subjects. That means a total of 199 schools - or nearly half the city's secondary schools - would be teaching entirely or mainly in English (*SCMP*, January 6 2010). Parents complained that the information for language arrangement was released in a disorganised way, which caused a great deal of confusion when they considered which schools to apply for enrolment (*SCMP*, December 16 2009). However, this does not change the fact that schools that would switch from Chinese to English teaching received a flood of applications on the first day of applications for Secondary One discretionary places for the new semester when the new language policy would take effect (*SCMP*, January 5 2010).

MOI policy and English language teaching

The controversy over the MOI policy shows that the political handover of Hong Kong to China has not caused the role of English to diminish in Hong Kong. The unwavering preference for English-medium schools by most parents and students indicates their confidence that proficiency in the language will continue to bring economic and career success. Schools, on the other hand, are worried that the change to the Chinese medium may impact their enrolment of higher quality students and the status of the schools and probably their students' attitudes and motivation towards learning English. Whether or not these views reflect a sound judgement of the situation, they indicate the enduring belief that English will continue to play a predominant role in the society and economy of Hong Kong after 1997.

The heated debates and contention between the schools and the Education Bureau have caused a number of adjustments to be made to the policy, before a medley was settled upon to accommodate different needs. This has caused some confusion for parents and students in gaining a clear picture of the language situation of the schools they were considering to apply for.

As suggested by Wright & Kelly-Holmes (1997), Hong Kong never had any clear-cut policies on language in education, especially concerning the medium of instruction in schools under the previous colonial administration. It is now necessary to encourage more studies and projects related to language policies in education so as to develop strategies to enhance students' trilingual proficiencies (in Cantonese, Putonghua and English). The lack of direction in the language policy area is likely to have an impact on the position of the English Language subject in the curriculum, and consequently the type of content and teaching approaches to be adopted, as well as the educational resources to be allocated to the subject.

3.3.2 Education reform in secondary schools

Starting from the early 2000s, Hong Kong has witnessed the implementation of a number of education reform initiatives which are considered as revolutionary as regards the extensive changes made to the existing education system and curriculum. According to the Curriculum Development Council (2001) of the Education Bureau, the reforms are to be implemented after a “holistic review” of the school curriculum so that a quality curriculum can be offered to help students to “attain all-round development and life-long learning” and “meet the challenges of a knowledge-based, interdependent and changing society, as well as globalisation, fast technological development, and a competitive

economy” (p.1).

The reform initiatives apply to eight Key Learning Areas³, of which English Language Education is one area. These cater for the development and application of generic skills, values and attitudes. Nine generic skills⁴ are identified as fundamental in enhancing student learning. They are to be developed through learning and teaching in the contexts of different subjects and are transferable to different learning situations. Students are also expected to develop appropriate values and attitudes while learning their own subjects. These are the principles or personal dispositions underlying appropriate conduct, decision-making, or task performance (Curriculum Development Council, 2001).

In short, the reformed curriculum aims to be all-encompassing, including all the ideals related to the all-round and lifelong development of students.

Aside from the curriculum reform, the 2000s have also been rife with waves of reform in various aspects of education, from the academic structure (the 3+3+4 structure and new senior secondary curriculum) and examination system (HKCEE and SBA), to school quality (school management and self-assessment) and teacher quality (LPAT). These initiatives will be further explored below.

A. Curriculum reform for English language teaching

The rationale underlying the curriculum reforms is set out in the introductory chapter of the *Curriculum Guide for English Language Education* in the form of a message from the

³ The eight Key Learning Areas are the eight subject areas of learning for secondary schools: Chinese Language Education, English Language Education, Mathematics Education, Personal, Social and Humanities Education, Science Education, Technology Education, Arts Education and Physical Education (Curriculum Development council, 2001).

⁴ The nine generic skills are: collaboration skills, communication skills, creativity, critical thinking skills, information technology skills, numeracy skills, problem-solving skills, self-management skills and study skills (Curriculum Development council, 2001).

Chairman of the Curriculum Development Council:

The school curriculum, apart from helping students to acquire necessary knowledge, should also help the younger generation to develop a global outlook, to learn how to learn and to master lifelong skills that can be used outside schools. The curriculum should also cultivate students' positive values and attitudes and achieve the educational aims of promoting whole-person development and lifelong learning. (Curriculum Development Council, 2002, p.4)

The following aim is presented for the curriculum framework of English Language Education: “provide learners with learning experiences to increase their language proficiency for study, work, leisure and personal enrichment; develop their knowledge, skills, values and attitudes; and promote lifelong learning so as to enhance their personal and intellectual development, cultural understanding and global competitiveness” (Curriculum Development Council, 2002, p.20).

The new curriculum aims to be inclusive of various ideals related to the development of the students. They are what Richards (2001, p.133-4) describes as “non-language outcomes” which may be related to “the personal, social, cultural, and political needs and rights of learners”. To accommodate all these encompassing ideals, the English Language curriculum has been organised under three “strands”: interpersonal, knowledge and experience; values and attitudes, as well as the nine generic skills, will also be incorporated (Curriculum Development Council, 2002).

The task-based approach has been adopted as the key teaching and learning approach for English language, as described under the heading “Task-based learning and teaching” in the *Curriculum Guide for English Language Education*. One section is devoted to the teaching of grammar, under the section “Learning grammar in context”. Quite specific descriptions of how grammar can be taught within TBLT are given. There are three major

principles to observe: (a) Grammar should be taught in context so that learners can gain a better understanding of how, why and when to use particular language structures and items; (b) A variety of exercises or activities ranging from those consisting of discrete grammar items to those encouraging contextualised grammar practice can be used; and (c) Grammar teaching can occur at different stages of task-based teaching: pre-task, during the task or after the task (Curriculum Development Council, 2002).

These specific guidelines on how grammar teaching can be implemented in the classroom are a stark contrast to the general style of the curriculum documents which often presents vague, generic and encompassing guiding principles about incorporating various educational ideals in enhancing student learning. How these ideas on grammar teaching are transferred to teaching materials, and conceptualised by teachers and practised in the classroom will be discussed later.

In addition to the curriculum reform, other reform initiatives have also been put forward regarding English language teaching. For example, ECR No. 6 puts forward the theme of “Enhancing Language Proficiency: A Comprehensive Strategy” (Education Commission, 1995). Two major focuses for improving English Language Education are proposed. The first is to improve teaching and learning; the second is to improve teacher quality.

B. Improving teaching and learning

To support teaching and learning, the Native English Teachers (NET) scheme was introduced to employ native English-speaking teachers in primary and secondary schools as a resource for both students and teachers, in terms of language teaching know-how, methodology and native language exposure (Asker, 1998). The policy, which was first introduced much earlier, was implemented extensively in the early 2000s without too much incident, aside from occasional reports that queried the teaching qualifications of

the newly employed NETs, the disparity in the terms of employment between these expatriate teachers and the local teachers (*SCMP*, November 6 1997), and adjustment problems for the NETs and their integration into the schools (*SCMP*, October 21 1997; March 15 1999).

More controversial were the reforms of the examination system. Starting from 2006, the government began implementing the school-based assessment (SBA) in secondary 4, with imminent plans to extend it to secondary 5. The basic concepts of the school-based assessment are:

1. Using SBA scores as a tool for continuous assessment to form a component of the total exam score at the end of senior secondary. The pressure of a final one-off exam is therefore reduced.
2. Students are assessed on whether they can express ideas based on their own extensive reading.

The emphasis of the new assessment is on oral and reading skills. Like the task-based approach, it encourages the development of the ability to use the language and communicate ideas verbally, rather than acquiring specific language forms or learning grammar. SBA is in line with the general spirit of the Education Reform in encouraging students to use their language for the practical purposes of thinking and doing things. The formative nature of the assessment is also a correction of the long-term weakness of the high pressure Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE), the public exit examination that all students need to take on completing their five years of secondary education. In short, SBA epitomises the concept of “Assessment for Learning”, one of the reform initiatives in upholding both the “processes” and the “products” of learning, making assessment “an integral part of the learning and teaching cycle rather than a

separate stage at the end of teaching” (Curriculum Development Council, 2001). In other words, assessments should contribute to learning rather than serving the mere purpose of testing students, and SBA was felt to be a bold stride in the direction to overhaul the long-existing and incessantly criticised public examination system.

No matter how justified the newly proposed assessment system looked, it did not seem easy to put these ideas on paper into practice. When the first phase of SBA was implemented in 2007, heated debates arose regarding its validity, reliability and feasibility. Schools staunchly opposed the tight schedule for its implementation, highlighting the additional pressure on teachers’ heavy workloads and the difficulty of applying consistent standards in all the schools to make it a fair assessment that produces reliable results for all the students in different schools. They called for a more gradual implementation schedule, simpler procedures, as well as more support and resources for the teachers (*SCMP*, May 7 2005; January 14 2006; April 29 2006; May 17 2006).

In response to the public outcry, the government decided to arrest the pace of the implementation. Schools were given more time to adjust to the change. They were also given the initial option to opt out in the first year, while the percentage of SBA as a component of the exit assessment for secondary 5 students was also lowered (*SCMP*, November 25 2006; January 13 2007). At present, SBA still carries a relatively low rating of 15% in the HKCEE.

The exam papers of the HKCEE for English Language have also been reformed, putting more emphasis on language use rather than language forms. Starting from 2008, one of the papers that tests students’ knowledge of grammar and decontextualised use of grammatical structures, Paper II, was taken out from the HKCEE. The reformed exam emphasised practical use of the language rather than testing directly the knowledge of

grammar. News articles then reported the worries that students felt about the new English language exam syllabus for the HKCEE. Some of them were worried about whether the new exam could discriminate between the strong and the weak students, as the lack of grammar in the new exam had made it too easy for most students (*SCMP*, May 5a 2007).

In general, the obvious intention in the curriculum documents to emphasise the importance of teaching grammar does not seem to be sustained in the reform of the examination system, which seems to be moving further away from grammar.

C. Improving teacher quality

Another suggestion in the ECR No.6 is the improvement of teacher quality. Some researchers have started to explore the relationship between the quality of the teachers and the standard of learning, and have come to the conclusion that the two were closely related. As queries about the professional competence of language teachers in Hong Kong have emerged, researchers like Coniam (1998, as cited in Asker, 1998) started to argue for a minimum-standard qualification for language teachers and the establishment of appropriate benchmarks to assure an appropriate level of competence. As a result, the Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualifications (ACTEQ) was set up by the government to improve teachers' language standards. It was decided that all graduating teachers of English would be benchmarked by 2000. By 2004, all English teachers would be professionally qualified; by 2007, all English teachers would be university graduates with a degree (Falvey, 1998). Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers (LPAT) has been conducted for a number of years by now. At present, most of the English teachers employed in schools are qualified according to one of these criteria. Instead of being held several times a year when it was first introduced, LPAT is now held only once annually, with the number of candidates greatly decreased.

The examination used to benchmark teachers, the Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers (LPAT), first started to operate in 2001. While the reformed examination for the students seems to be moving away from grammar, this examination for the teachers emphasises grammar as one of its important components. Most of the papers test teachers' language proficiency level or communicative ability in the classroom. However, there is a section which is quite different in the Writing paper that requires candidates to correct grammatical errors and explain the grammatical rules associated with them. This section carries a weighting of 50% for the Writing paper, out of five papers candidates need to take. Candidates also need to discuss writing samples of students' grammatical mistakes in the Speaking paper, which also carries 50% of that paper (Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government, 2000).

The LPAT exam tests teachers' ability to use metalanguage and explain grammar explicitly; it does not give much direction on how teachers should make use of this ability to teach grammar in the classroom. However, it is still viewed by some researchers and practitioners as something like a pointer for teacher methodology. Soon after the LPAT was implemented, Glenwright (2002) warned that it was "likely to exert a detrimental influence on the assessment of student writing by reinforcing traditional conceptions of language, grammar and pedagogy" (p.84). Clearly there are some good grounds for such a view. If teachers are expected to possess the ability to explain grammar explicitly, it is likely that they will make use of this ability in teaching.

The teacher assessment gave rise to heated, mostly negative comments, especially in the initial years of its implementation. A number of articles in the newspaper, most of them written by members of the teaching profession, expressed negative views towards the LPAT, accusing it of "scapegoating" teachers for the falling language standards of students and imposing unnecessary pressure on them (*SCMP*, June 11 2000). Some of the

comments concern the low pass rates, especially for the grammar correction and explanation paper, and discuss the implications of this situation for teaching quality (*SCMP*, May 27 2008).

The introduction of the LPAT has also stimulated research interests in English teachers' subject knowledge and grammatical knowledge, as well as their beliefs and practices in grammar teaching. These studies contribute different views on how grammar should be taught in schools. Andrews (1994; 1999a; 1999b; 2001; 2003; 2006), for example, has written a number of papers on the topic of teachers' metalinguistic awareness (TMA) in recent years. The term TMA that Andrews uses is built on his earlier exploration of what he calls "teachers' grammatical knowledge awareness", by which he means: (1) knowledge of grammatical terminology; and (2) understanding of the concepts associated with terms (Andrews, 1994). TMA is a further expansion on the basic concepts that cover a teacher's ability to interact with the three main sources of input for learners in the classroom: the teaching materials, the other learners and the teacher. In a later discussion, Andrews (2001) expands the concept further to propose a model, in which the L2 teacher's language awareness (TLA) is seen as a sub-component of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), forming a bridge between knowledge of subject matter and communicative language ability.

In his research, Andrews (1994, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2006) examines teachers' knowledge, views and practice related to grammar, and the impact of TMA/TLA on learning. In all his studies, Andrews emphasises the importance of the teacher's grammatical knowledge on language teaching, whether under the terminology of TMA or TLA. He suggests that TMA plays an important role in helping L2 teachers structure input for learners. A teacher's TMA can interact with the language produced by the three main sources of input for learners in a L2 classroom, namely, language input from teaching materials,

from other learners and from the teacher. It operates as a kind of filter which affects the way each source of input is made available to the learner. Drawing upon data on three teachers he gathered as part of an in-depth study of the TMA of 17 Hong Kong secondary school teachers of English, he illustrates some of the ways in which TMA can affect the input made available for learning, both negatively and positively (Andrews, 1999b).

In another paper, Andrews (2001) further discusses the impact of TLA on pedagogical practice. He believes that TLA has a profound effect upon the teacher's performance of a range of tasks in the classroom. These tasks include: (1) mediating the input made available to the learners; (2) making salient the key grammatical features within that input; (3) providing exemplification and clarification; (4) monitoring students' output; (5) monitoring the teacher's own output; and (7) limiting the potential sources of learner confusion in the input; and (8) reflecting on the potential impact of all such mediation on the learners' understanding.

Another attempt to address teachers' grammatical knowledge was made by Wu and Tsui (1997), who introduced an electronic grammar database for the use of L2 teachers in Hong Kong secondary schools. The electronic database TeleGram is one of four databases under TeleNex, which is a computer network for teacher development. On the network are three other databases that teachers can access: TeleTeach, which is a teaching resources database; TeleTest, which is a test item bank; and TeleText, which is a bank of newspaper articles. In addition, there is a messaging system.

In designing TeleGram, Wu and Tsui (1997) try to address two fundamental issues. The first issue pertains to the differences between a teacher's grammar and a reference grammar. The second issue concerns how best to exploit the electronic medium as a device for organising grammatical information. They also formulate four guiding

principles for producing TeleGram. They are:

- Grammar should be seen as a resource for making meaning.
- Grammar should be considered in relation to texts.
- Grammatical information should have a pedagogical orientation.
- The needs of teachers with different levels of language expertise should be catered for.

The principles underlying the design of TeleGram are expounded further in a later article by Lock & Tsui (2000), which suggests that the database aims to incorporate insights from functional grammar and corpus linguistics while keeping the information accessible and relevant to teachers familiar only with traditional approaches to grammar. This has involved exploiting the advantages of hypertext, explicitly foregrounding pedagogical concerns and developing a metalanguage that will allow discussion of areas such as transitivity and theme without alienating the teacher-users. These compromises are necessary in order to match the linguistic information to the needs and existing knowledge of the teacher-users.

All in all, these researchers seem to hold certain common concepts about grammar teaching, although some of them may have stronger views than the others. It seems that to different extents, they agree that grammatical knowledge is necessary for L2 teachers, who need to make use of it in the classroom. Explicit teaching of grammar is useful and acceptable, if not always necessary. On the other hand, they also seem to consider the meaning and use aspects of grammar to be more important than a mere emphasis on form.

3.4 Chapter summary

To contextualise the investigation of how curriculum ideas are interpreted in textbooks and implemented by individual teachers in the following chapters, this chapter reviews the literature on the role of teachers in curriculum implementation and examines the local educational developments which may impact on how grammar teaching is perceived and practised. The discussion in this chapter shows that the government educational and language teaching policies appear conflicting in relation to grammar teaching and learning. Most of the educational reform policies related to English language teaching in recent years seem to be moving away from the more traditional explicit approach of teaching and learning grammar to emphasise the use of the language. Examples are the introduction of SBA (with its emphasis on extensive reading and free expression), and the elimination of a grammar-oriented objective exam paper in the HKCEE. On the other hand, teachers are expected to have grammatical knowledge and to be able to use grammatical terminology to explain grammar rules explicitly in their classes (as required by LPAT). There is also evidence that some of the researchers and practitioners are supportive of more explicit teaching of grammar.

This paradoxical relationship between grammar and communication in the policies reiterates the tension inherent in the relationship between TBLT and grammar teaching. Chapter 4 will explore further how this conceptual paradox may be transferred to the teaching materials.

Chapter 4 Curriculum interpretation in teaching materials

4.1 Introduction

Curriculum implementation is a complex process. Research has often discussed the relationship between the intended and enacted curriculum (Cohen, 1990; Orland-Barak, Kemp, Ben-Or, & Levi, 2004; Remillard, 2005), that is, the connection between the curriculum as stated on paper in curriculum documents and the curriculum which is actually implemented in teaching. Remillard (2005), for example, describes a framework of components of the teacher-curriculum relationship, and suggests that “the four principal constructs of the framework are (a) the teacher, (b) the curriculum, (c) the participatory relationship between them, and (d) the resulting planned and enacted curricula” (p.236). In particular, he points out the importance of “curriculum use” in implementing a curriculum. Curriculum use “refers to how individual teachers interact with, draw on, refer to, and are influenced by material resources designed to guide instruction” (p.212).

As curriculum use by teachers involves a process of interacting with the curriculum resources and transforming the written curriculum, it is important to examine the ways curriculum ideas are stated on paper and transmitted to curriculum resources and teaching materials, in order to gain a clear picture of how the intended curriculum is finally enacted in classroom teaching. This chapter will start with a discussion of recent trends in ELT curriculum design and organisation, which may have an impact on how grammar is positioned in the English language curriculum of Hong Kong secondary schools. It will be followed by an analysis of the curriculum ideas on grammar teaching before an exploration of how they are transmitted to supporting curriculum resources, textbooks and teaching materials. This will give a stronger context for examining how the

curriculum ideas are actually implemented in the classroom.

4.2 Recent trends in ELT curriculum design and organisation

A number of researchers have contributed to the positioning and theorising of the task-based language curriculum. Candlin (1984) distinguishes three approaches to curriculum design for L2 teaching and learning, structural, functional and experiential, or some combination of the three: (a) the traditional, structural-analytic approach in which the highest priority is given to formal grammatical criteria; (b) the functional-analytic approach, which defines objectives in terms of categories of communicative language use; and (c) a non-analytic, experiential, or “natural growth” approach, which aims to immerse learners in real-life communication without any artificial pre-selection or arrangement of items.

Wilkins (1976) also makes a distinction between two approaches to designing syllabuses: synthetic and analytic. In a synthetic syllabus, acquisition is taken as a process of gradual accumulation of the parts until the whole structure of the language has been built up. In planning such a syllabus, the global language is broken down into an inventory of grammatical structures and a limited list of lexical items. On the other hand, in analytic syllabuses there is no attempt to maintain this careful linguistic control of learning. Learning is considered as something more holistic and a much greater variety of linguistic structures can be included. Learning can focus on specific linguistic forms which can be isolated from the structurally heterogeneous context in which they occur. The situational, notional and functional syllabuses are examples of this type.

Breen and Candlin (2001) consider language learning within a communicative curriculum as communicative interaction involving all the participants in the learning

process and including the various material resources on which the learning is exercised. Language learning may be seen as a process which grows out of the interaction between learners, teachers, texts and activities. Therefore, the communicative curriculum places content within methodology. What matters most is the process of learning rather than the learning product. The selection and organisation of learning content should be subject to the communicative purposes of learning and teaching.

The communicative curriculum is therefore process-oriented, with a scope for variability and flexibility in response to various teaching contexts which suit the needs of individual teachers and students. Constructed basically according to a communicative rationale, the task-based curriculum is also characterised by a similar kind of fluidity and inclusiveness. Markee (1997), for example, believes that task-based language teaching has no single monolithic identity. Instead, it is an umbrella term that subsumes various elements, such as the process syllabus, the procedural syllabus, or even SLA research. As both the task-based curriculum and task-based language teaching can be considered as containing heterogeneous elements of other syllabuses and approaches, they are often implemented in different ways depending on teachers' preferences.

White (1988) also distinguishes between Type A and Type B syllabuses. Type A syllabuses have a subject emphasis on what is to be learnt, while Type B syllabuses have a process emphasis on how it is to be learnt. A task-based ELT curriculum, tends to be a combination of both Type A and Type B syllabuses, with both a content and process emphasis, according to the distinction of White (1988). It is this combination of the content and process elements in the task-based curriculum which makes the teachers' role in the curriculum so important, as he/she is the chief decision maker for choices of content and methodology in the teaching process.

4.3 Curriculum ideas on grammar teaching in the task-based secondary curriculum of Hong Kong

4.3.1 Overview of curriculum development in Hong Kong

In Hong Kong, developments in grammar teaching approaches have been very much influenced by major developments in second language teaching and learning theories in other parts of the world, especially in western countries like the United Kingdom, United States and Australia where ideas usually originate or are developed. In response to these ideas, the issue of the place of grammar instruction in the English Language curriculum has received different emphases owing to the changes in teaching pedagogy in recent decades.

Before the 1980s, English teaching in Hong Kong secondary schools was mainly dominated by the grammar translation and oral structural approaches, following western trends at the time. The 1975 syllabus adopted the oral structural approach which emphasises the learning of language forms through repetitive practice (Curriculum Development Committee, 1975). It was then superseded by the 1983 syllabus which adopted the communicative teaching approach, shifting the emphasis from mastery of language forms to the communication of meaning (Curriculum Development Council, 1983).

So starting from the mid-1980s, the communicative approach was the officially endorsed approach for English Language teaching. With its emphasis on language use, language forms no longer received so much attention. By the 1990s, supporters of the communicative approach began to realise that it is inappropriate to totally neglect grammar. Some of them put forward the view that grammar should not be excluded from

the communicative approach, and that more grammar should be incorporated into the communicative curriculum (Education Department, 1993).

While some consider inadequate grammar teaching as one of the shortcomings in English teaching in the past two decades, others believe the communicative approach has not been adequately implemented because of too much emphasis on grammar. A number of researchers held the view that the language classroom was still dominated by a large amount of repetitive structural practices of language forms, with insufficient attention to meaning and communication (Mak, 2004). To redress the problem, the government introduced the Target-Oriented Curriculum (TOC) in 1995. It was first implemented in primary schools, with a plan to extend the scheme to secondary schools by 2001 (Adamson & Morris, 2000).

As the name Target-Oriented Curriculum indicates, the proposed curriculum connected learning tasks to the attainment of communicative targets. It was designed to improve the quality of individual learning in Hong Kong schools by addressing the following perceived problems in the Hong Kong education system: an overcrowded and fragmented curriculum; over-emphasis on the rote-learning of discrete chunks of information; lack of awareness of the role of language in learning; limited efforts to cater for individual learner differences; and assessment methods focused primarily on ranking students (Clark et al., 1994, as cited in Carless, 1999). As a curriculum innovation, TOC was quite revolutionary. It was described by Morris et al. (1996, as cited in Carless, 1999) as the most significant landmark in curriculum reform in Hong Kong since the Second World War, given that it attempted to change three key “message systems”, namely the nature of knowledge/schooling, pedagogy and assessment.

The implementation of TOC, however, was short-lived. It invoked so much criticism

from society that the government decided to give it up by 2000. The initiative never had a chance to progress to secondary level. According to Carless (1999), there were a number of reasons why TOC failed so speedily. The first major problem in the early implementation of TOC seemed to be the role of assessment. The second major problem was that teachers experienced difficulties in operationalising the TOC notion of catering for individual learner differences, due to large class sizes and heavy workloads. The third major problem was that teachers were generally unclear about the nature of tasks and the theory and practice of task-based learning.

The legacies of TOC, however, remained and were ready to re-emerge in another form. With respect to ELT, TOC had much in common with process-oriented, communicative or task-based approaches (Carless, 1999). The criterion-referenced assessment, which invoked most criticism, had to be abandoned, but the idea of using learning tasks as the basis of learning was retained. In the 1999 syllabus, the task-based approach emerged again with renewed emphasis on the use of learning tasks to facilitate communication. As a curriculum initiative, the task-based approach was not really something new. Instead, it was a continuation of the communicative approach which started in the 1980s and intensified in the TOC initiative near the end of the 1990s. This emphasis on communication is set out clearly as the aim of the task-based approach in the syllabus, which is to provide learners with opportunities to participate in activities designed to engage them in authentic, practical and functional use of the language for meaningful communication (Curriculum Development Council, 1999).

The syllabus makes suggestions about the structure and organization principles of the teaching materials. For example, the concepts of “modules”, “units” and “tasks” can be used in organising teaching and learning. It also suggests some topics for the modules and units, but the teaching content is not designated. Instead, teachers “may develop modules

of their own to suit the interests and abilities of their particular group of teachers”
(Curriculum Development Council, 1999, p.44-45).

At the end of the learning process, students are expected to achieve targets relating to three types of dimension: interpersonal dimension, knowledge dimension and experience dimension. These dimension targets aim to develop students’ capability to use English:

- to establish and maintain relationships;
- to exchange ideas and information; and
- to get things done.

(Interpersonal Dimension)

- to provide, or find out, interpret and use information;
- to explore, express and apply ideas; and
- to solve problems.

(Knowledge Dimension)

- to respond and give expression to real and imaginative experiences.

(Experience Dimension)

(Curriculum Development Council, 1999)

It is within this framework of teaching and learning that grammar teaching is delineated in the curriculum documents to be implemented within the task-based approach. The next section will examine how grammar teaching is presented in the curriculum documents.

4.3.2 Curriculum ideas on grammar teaching within the task-based curriculum

A. What kind of grammar is taught in secondary schools?

In the *Syllabus for English Language*, grammar is described as “language items and communicative functions”. The following are some examples:

Table 4.1 Examples of language items and communicative functions in the English Language Syllabus (Curriculum Development Council, 1999)

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As shown in the examples, the language items are the grammatical structures; the communicative functions are the uses to which these grammatical structures are put for the purposes of communication. For example, adjectives, adverbs and formulaic phrases are grammatical structures used to achieve the communicative functions of making comparisons and giving descriptions of processes and situations. Therefore, the grammatical structures are to be taught in relation to the communicative purposes they serve. They need to be taught for communicating meaning in different situations. This concept of grammar is built on ideas about functional grammar first put forward by

previous researchers such as Wilkins (1976), who explored “notions” or “grammatical functions” in notional syllabuses. Halliday (1994) further expounded ideas on functional grammar and describes it as “a ‘natural’ grammar, in the sense that everything in it can be explained, ultimately, by reference to how language is used” (p.xiii). This connection of function to meaningful use of the language is expounded further in the following description: “The fundamental components of meaning in language are functional components. All languages are organised around two main kinds of meaning, the ‘ideational’ or reflective, and the ‘interpersonal’ or active” (p.xiii). These two components are similar to the knowledge/experience and interpersonal dimensions of learning described in the secondary English syllabus. These ideas about the functional use of language are taken on further by other researchers in their discussions on pedagogical grammar. Butt, Fahey, Spinks, & Yallop (1995) expounded on the three broad functions of language which are central to the way that grammar works in the language system: the representational function, interpersonal function and textual function. Lock (1996) further elaborated the need to engage learners directly with the making of experiential, interpersonal, and textual meanings in teaching grammar at all levels.

B. How grammar is to be taught?

The guidelines on grammar teaching in the curriculum documents are both specific and comprehensive. On the one hand, there are specific descriptions of how grammar can be taught under the task-based approach. On the other hand, there are suggestions about various possible strategies and activities for grammar teaching which can be used flexibly within the curriculum.

The organisation principle of the teaching materials is set out clearly in both of the major curriculum documents, the *Syllabus for English Language*, and the *Curriculum Guide for English Language Education*. According to the ideas in these documents, teaching and

learning should be organised according to the concepts of modules, units and tasks. In other words, teaching materials need to be related in themes, which means teaching activities should also be well integrated to serve the main focuses. Within this framework, grammar will be taught and integrated into the activities (Curriculum Development Council, 1999, 2002). The following is a summary of the more specific ideas about how to teach grammar from the curriculum documents:

(b) *Curriculum Guide for English Language Education*, under the section “Learning grammar in context”

- The task-based approach to language learning encourages the learning and teaching of grammar in context so that learners gain a better understanding of how, why and when to use particular language structures and items.
- After the relevant grammar structures and items have been selected, the teacher engages learners in exercises or activities ranging from those consisting of discrete grammar items to those encouraging contextualised grammar practice.
- The learning and teaching of grammar need not be restricted to the pre-task stage. It can be done during the task or after the task.

(Curriculum Development Council, 2002)

(c) *Syllabus for English Language*, under the section “Place of grammar teaching in task-based learning”

- Exercises can be used at different stages of a task cycle to meet the needs of learners
- Grammar teaching can take place at different stages of task-based teaching and learning, e.g. before a task, during a task, or after a task
- Within the framework of task-based learning, grammar is a means to an end and it should not be taught as a system of rules or a stand-alone body of knowledge

- Teachers should not explain grammatical rules alone. Also, they should not introduce grammar through a heavy concentration of decontextualised and mechanical drills.
- Techniques for making grammar more interesting and effective:
 - Use charts, timelines, pictures, songs, videos, CD-ROMs, etc.
 - Use authentic texts
 - Involve learners' personal experience
 - Use games
 - Get learners to discover language patterns on their own

(Curriculum Development Council, 1999)

A number of ideas are salient from these curriculum documents, as summarised below:

- (a) Grammar is best learnt or taught in context.
- (b) Within the framework of task-based learning, grammar is a means to an end and it should not be taught as a system of rules or a stand-alone body of knowledge.
- (c) A variety of grammar teaching methods can be used. These include exercises or activities ranging from those consisting of discrete grammar items to those encouraging contextualised grammar practice.
- (d) Grammar teaching can take place at different stages of task-based teaching and learning, e.g. before a task, during a task, or after a task.

These ideas about grammar teaching are not original. They in fact originate from the ideas of a number of researchers or theorists who have explored the nature of grammar teaching within a communicative or task-based approach. That grammar should be taught in context using a variety of teaching methods is something commonly accepted by most researchers on grammar teaching in the recent decade. Some researchers also put forward more specific ideas about grammar teaching. Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999),

for example, make the point that “explicit grammatical information should be a means to an end, not an end in itself” (p.6). A number of researchers have also suggested that grammar can be taught at different stages of task-based teaching and learning: before a task, during a task, or after a task, making use of a variety of activities or strategies (Bygate, 1994; Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 1989, 2004; Richards, 1999; Skehan, 1998; Willis, 1996).

These ideas give a comprehensive picture of grammar teaching as something which can occur at different stages, in different forms, using different approaches and may be integrated into different teaching situations. However, something which looks so general and flexible naturally also makes it indefinite in practical applications. The ideas also look haphazardly put together to accommodate different perspectives instead of systematically integrated into a coherent framework. They include various possibilities without making it clear how much emphasis grammar teaching should receive in order to be appropriately integrated into the task-based approach, and to what extent it can be form-focused or meaning-focused in being implemented in a task-based classroom.

The inclusive descriptions about grammar teaching may also be an attempt to resolve the tension between TBLT and grammar teaching within the indeterminacy of a task-based curriculum which seems to be more process-oriented than having a definite content. This relegation of grammar to a subordinate position of “a means to an end” rather than “a system of rules or a stand-alone body of knowledge” (Curriculum Development Council, 1999, p.50) somehow adjusts the positions of TBLT and grammar teaching and makes them more compatible. It widens the scope of what is permissible in teaching grammar at different stages of TBLT using various types of meaning-focused and form-focused activities.

The idea of teaching grammar in context also seems in conflict with the use of a variety of grammar teaching methods, including exercises of discrete grammar items, which are usually not much contextualised. To gain a coherent concept of this, it is necessary to make a distinction between the task-based teaching of grammar which is highly contextualised, and the teaching of grammar within the task-based approach, which may allow decontextualised form-focused activities aimed at facilitating the learning of grammatical structures that are useful for accomplishing the tasks. The latter positions grammar as a means to an end. However, this restricts the meaning of teaching or learning grammar in context in actual teaching practice.

No matter what comprehensive and accommodating suggestions are put forward in the curriculum documents about how grammar can be taught within TBLT, there is a limit to the number and types of activities that can actually be included in the language curriculum, or implemented in the classroom. Even if a variety of grammar teaching methods can be used, only a small number will finally be adopted within the confines of a curriculum and the limited amount of lesson time allocated to the teaching of grammar. Even if grammar teaching can take place at different stages of TBLT, it cannot really occur every time before a task, during a task or after a task, as there will then be too many form-focused activities, which may be out of proportion to the meaning-focused activities which are supposed to be the mainstay of TBLT. Ideas in the curriculum documents can be inclusive of various possibilities, but what will actually happen when these ideas are operationalised in actual teaching may be much more context-bound and restrictive.

The best ways of addressing these issues will be to examine how teaching materials are designed and how grammar teaching is implemented. Before these curriculum ideas are operationalised in the individual school curriculums and teaching practices in individual classrooms, it would also be useful to investigate how they are further conveyed by the

Education Bureau to the schools and the teachers through curriculum workshops or seminars, and exemplars of appropriate teaching materials.

4.3.3 Communication of curriculum ideas on grammar teaching

To disseminate the ideas endorsed in the new curriculum, the EDB has published exemplars of appropriate teaching materials and conducted workshops or seminars on the implementation of the task-based approach. Analyses of these will shed light on how these ideas can be operationalised in more specific contexts.

A. Exemplars in curriculum documents

Two appendices in the *English Language Syllabus* provide exemplars of teaching materials for S1 to S3 students: “Appendix 7: Exemplar Learning Tasks for KS3 and Appendix 10: Exemplar Graded Task for KS3” (Curriculum Development Council, 1999). They provide examples of learning tasks which are quite similar. The first task in Appendix 7 is selected for analysis as it is quite representative of the other exemplar learning tasks in the syllabus. Appendix 10 is different from Appendix 7 in providing examples of learning tasks which can be adjusted for different proficiency levels.

The first exemplar learning task in Appendix 7 of the *English Language Syllabus* entitled “Eye on the World” makes use of the context of a theme park for learners to read, listen and speak English, playing the roles of tourist guides. (Please refer to Appendix 4.1 of this thesis.) It is a fully-fledged learning task designed according to the criteria set out in the curriculum documents and re-stated at the beginning of this section. In short, it engages learners in learning activities which are designed to engage learners in the authentic, practical and functional use of language for meaningful purposes. It also has a purpose and a context, which involves learners in a mode of thinking and doing, drawing

upon their own framework of knowledge, and leading towards a product at the end (Curriculum Development Council, 1999). The lesson plan presented before the teaching material clearly states what kind of grammatical structures are involved, under “Language Items and Communicative Functions”: use adjectives to make comparisons and give descriptions of processes and situations; use the simple present tense to make general statements about the world and “universal truths”; and use imperatives⁵ to refer freely to events in the future and to the frequency with which things occur (Curriculum Development Council, 1999). However, there are no specific instructions or implications in the material about focusing attention on form. The most grammar-based material is a cloze exercise, but it is for practising general rather than specific structures and vocabulary targeted in the task (as presented in the lesson plan). Other than that, the task mainly provides reading and listening inputs leading to a production task at the end, where the learners play the roles of tourist guides who take visitors through different sections of the theme park. This is, in fact, quite a typical task in TBLT, but grammar is not really addressed specifically. The other exemplar tasks are quite similar in the Syllabus.

Eight out of 16 of the exemplars in the *Curriculum Guide* apply to S1 to S3 (Curriculum Development Council, 2002). They all have focuses of their own in reference to various curriculum reform initiatives, such as project learning, reading to learn, use of information technology, use of community resources, making connections, creativity, critical thinking, cultural awareness, learner diversity and assessment for learning. One of the exemplars focuses on grammar. It is entitled “Learning grammar through a task-based approach: ‘Inviting a friend to a food festival’”. (Please refer to Appendix 4.2.)

The three major ideas on learning grammar in TBLT that this exemplar task aims to

⁵ Imperatives refer to the grammatical structures for giving orders, instructions or advice about what to do. They usually start with a verb instead of a subject, e.g. Take the second turning on the right.

illustrate are stated explicitly at the beginning of the tasks:

- Grammar is learnt and taught in a meaningful way;
- Grammar learning is a motivating experience, as learners are involved in a task they can relate to; and
- Grammar learning can take place before, during and after a task.

(Curriculum Development Council, 2002)

Here the grammatical structure involved is the preposition of time. In the task learners are asked to write an invitation letter, which involves doing something authentic within a meaningful context that learners can relate to. The task can therefore fulfil one of the basic criteria of the task-based approach. However, whether the task can facilitate grammar learning is more problematic. It is indicated clearly in the instructions where grammar can receive attention pre-task, during-task and post-task. What can be achieved in the pre-task stage is described as follows: “Through engaging in meaningful, focused practice that progresses from exercises with discrete items to contextualised activities, learners develop their capabilities to use the grammar item accurately and appropriately” (Curriculum Development Council, 2002, p. E56).

In the pre-task stage, learners are asked to do two gap-filling exercises with discrete grammar items focusing on prepositions of time. The first one requires completing statements about a birthday party and a Christmas wedding; the second one requires completing an invitation letter to a birthday party. These are basically decontextualised discrete-item grammar exercises, although there is an attempt to make use of sentences related to the context of invitations and letters. Learners are then asked to write a short letter inviting a friend to a birthday party, which is mainly a production task which provides the opportunity to make use of prepositions of time. Teachers can check learners’ progress and give guidance and feedback at this stage.

During the task, learners are asked to write an invitation to a “food festival” using a process writing approach⁶. According to the instructions, grammar is supposed to be dealt with through self-monitoring and peer feedback. After the task, “the teacher gives feedback on the learners’ use of prepositions of time and provides further opportunities to revise the grammar item.” (Curriculum Development Council, 2002, p. E56).

Aside from the exercises provided at the pre-task stage, learners are not provided with any materials at the other stages: during-task and post-task. Rather, there are instructions or descriptions on what teachers and learners can do about grammar, without any specific details about how they can do them. The exemplification of grammar teaching here does not really exemplify, but rather it looks like abstract descriptions of what should be done, which are unsubstantiated with practical details for application. It is an attempt to address what teaching and learning grammar is about within TBLT, just like the ideas in the curriculum documents, without specific ideas for teaching practice. How grammar is to be taught will probably depend very much on the perceptions of individual teachers, and their own way of applying these ideas in their teaching practice.

B. Workshop/seminar materials for disseminating curriculum ideas

To disseminate curriculum ideas, workshops on using the task-based approach have also been conducted by the EDB for secondary teachers. Two of these have been selected for analysis, as they are the key workshops for the dissemination of ideas concerning the task-based approach conducted in repeated runs for secondary teachers.

⁶ A teaching approach which emphasises the process of writing as a way of developing students’ writing skills. Students are supposed to put effort on planning, drafting and revising their drafts before they complete their final writing product.

Workshop on Task-based Language Teaching, Learning and Assessment

This is a two-day workshop conducted in two parts. Since the task-based approach has been implemented for some time, this workshop puts emphasis on conducting assessments under TBLT, although there is an introduction to major ideas on the task-based approach at the beginning of the workshop. The focus for Part 1 is on the general assessment tasks under the task-based approach; the focus for Part 2 is on other types of assessment, such as formative assessment and portfolio assessment. (Please refer to the workshop schedule in Appendix 4.3).

In Part 2 of the workshop, grammar is one of the main focuses and covered in a 1 hour 15 minute session under the topic “Incorporating grammar into formative task-based assessment. ” In this session, participants are given ideas about how to incorporate grammar into formative task-based assessment. The type of grammar can range from discrete grammar items to contextualised practice. This session involves very little lecturing from the speaker on how to teach grammar, and the ideas do not go much beyond those presented in the curriculum documents. Rather, a large part of the session is a hands-on activity in which teachers are asked to develop grammar activities in groups. Some general instructions are given in the handout on ways to address grammatical structures which help students to carry out the given tasks. These activities can be used in the pre-task, during-task and post-task stages. (Please refer to the workshop handout in Appendix 4.4).

Ideas on how to teach grammar are in line with those in the curriculum documents, such as grammar activities that can range from discrete grammar items to contextualised practice, which may be carried out at different stages of the lessons. However, no specific ideas are given about the exact content of grammar teaching. That a large part of the session is dedicated to hands-on practice in developing grammar activities is once again

indicative of the indeterminate nature of grammar teaching within TBLT – it is the practice of the individual teacher that will ultimately decide what activities will actually take place.

In-service Teacher Development Course on Task-based Language Learning, Teaching and Assessment

This is a longer and purportedly more comprehensive teacher development course on the task-based approach. It spans one week with five evening sessions of three hours each. At the end of the course, each teacher participant is required to submit a portfolio which includes tasks that they have developed for use in their classes, plus three pieces of reflective writing on what they have learnt and accomplished in the course.

As can be seen in the course outline (Appendix 4.5), each of the five sessions has a focus on one aspect of task-based learning, teaching and assessment. Session 1 is an introductory session on the fundamental concepts of TBLT as presented in the curriculum and ways that TBLT can be implemented. Session 2 focuses on teaching grammar in TBLT. Session 3 elaborates on the fundamental principles of TBLT. Session 4 gives further ideas on the implementation of TBLT making use of a variety of materials. Session 5 focuses on the relationship between teaching and assessment, and the different types of task-based assessments.

One major feature of the course is the obvious attention given to grammar by devoting one session out of five to this focus. The course handout (Appendix 4.6) shows that the grammar teaching approach follows ideas in the curriculum documents, although it focuses only on one structure (-ing form) presented as grammar input in the pre-task stage, which finally leads to the completion of a task (conducting a survey) that makes use of the structure.

The grammar teaching approach presented here is similar to the pre-task input of language structures described in the curriculum documents. Learners are given grammar input in the form of grammar explanation and exercises. They are then asked to practise using the target structure in a task. There is an intention to teach grammar within an authentic context and provides an opportunity to use the structure in a meaningful way. As for variety in methods and materials, the teacher participants are asked to reflect on these and develop their own materials for trying out in their own classrooms.

These two professional development sessions were conducted quite a few times in the early 2000s, that is, the introductory years of the task-based curriculum. The way grammar has been addressed is actually quite similar in both of them. By the mid-2000s, attention shifted to wider curriculum initiatives like assessment for learning, catering for learner diversity, cross-curricular learning, use of information technology, use of language arts, and self-access learning. Beginning with the 2006-7 academic year, a great deal of attention has been devoted to the reform in the secondary learning and assessment system, in the forms of the New Senior Secondary Curriculum and School-based Assessment. EDB publications and professional development sessions in recent years have also contributed in large part to these major initiatives. The basic principles of TBLT and the integration of grammar into TBLT are no longer major focuses receiving much attention (based on information from EDB website on resources and training).

4.4 Grammar teaching concepts and approaches in textbook materials

Schools were given a few years to adjust to the new task-based curriculum presented in the 1999 English Language Syllabus. Starting from the academic year of 2002 to 2003, all secondary schools were officially required to implement the task-based approach by

changing to one of the textbooks on the recommended textbook list approved by the EDB as appropriately designed textbooks endorsing the task-based approach. An examination of how these textbooks incorporate grammar can give us ideas about whether the grammar teaching materials included in the textbooks are compatible with the grammar teaching approach described in the curriculum documents, and how grammar teaching ideas in the curriculum documents may be operationalised in classroom teaching. The analyses are based on the grammar teaching ideas in the curriculum documents that have been discussed in section 4.3.2B of this chapter.

Publishers have put forward new textbooks to meet the requirements of the new curriculum. Two of the textbooks published by the same publisher have been well received and adopted by most of the schools since they were required to change to task-based textbooks in 2002. They are *Longman Express* and *Longman Target English*. The content and organization of the two books are very similar, although there is a difference in level of difficulty. The former is for higher level students and the latter for lower level students. Two out of the three schools⁷ that participated in the pilot study to investigate individual teachers' grammar teaching concepts and practice reported in section 5.5 of Chapter 5 used one of these books; all eight schools in the main study reported in Chapter 6 used one of them.

The textbook analysis of this section focuses on one of the chapters, Unit 4, in one of the commonly-used textbooks, *Longman Express 1A* (2004), which was also used by one of the teachers in the pilot study. The other books in the same series follow a similar structure, so do the *Longman Target English* textbooks. In fact, Unit 4 is quite a typical chapter quite representative of similar units in both series of textbooks, whether in

⁷ That means three out of the four teachers, as two of the teachers in the pilot study were from the same school using one of the Longman books. The eight teacher participants in the main study are all from different schools.

content, organisation or layout. With the limitation of space, a detailed analysis of one chapter is perhaps more useful than a lengthy and repetitive analysis of similar units for presenting the type of material that English teachers commonly use in secondary classrooms following the launch of the new curriculum.

The general organisation of the textbook *Longman Express 1A* (2004) used for secondary 1 level for the first semester adheres to the organisation principles for textbook materials as set out in the curriculum documents. The whole book is structured according to modules, units and tasks and the materials are related in themes. There are a total of three modules and five units, which are organised around themes familiar to students. There are two units for the module “School life”, two units for the module “In and around Hong Kong” and one unit for “Leisure and entertainment”. There is also a topic focus for each unit, for example, the theme for Unit 3 is “shopping”, while Unit 4 focuses on “eating out.” There are usually two tasks for students to complete at the end of each unit.

Each unit is organised according to five headings: “Pre-reading”, “Reading”, “Language focus”, “Language practice and language roundup”, “Vocabulary checklist” and “Tasks”. According to this structure, language learning proceeds with pre-learning the given vocabulary about a topic; reading about the topic; learning the language structures most commonly used for the topic; practising the structures; revising the vocabulary learnt; and completing the tasks at the end. Grammar mainly features in the “Language focus” and “Language practice and language roundup” sections. (Please refer to the contents page of *Longman Express 1A* in Appendix 4.7.)

A close look at the two grammar sections in one of the units will give us clearer ideas on how grammar is presented in the textbook. Unit 4, “Eating out”, for example, includes two language focuses. They are “wh-questions” and “prepositions of time”. (Please refer

to Unit 4 in Appendix 4.8.) In the “Language focus” section, the structures are presented and explained briefly. This is followed by short exercises or practice in the “Language practice & language roundup” section. The organization of materials in these “language” sections looks quite similar to the “presentation” and “practice” stages of the traditional PPP approach. The only difference is that the presentation and practice elements are related to the main theme of eating out. They are therefore more contextualised than the PPP approach. The two tasks at the end of the unit give learners opportunities to produce the language. They are clearly more contextualised, and allow for the more authentic and spontaneous use of the language. However, it is not completely unguided. There are guidance instructions to support the completion of the tasks. In fact, students are gradually directed towards the completion of the tasks throughout the unit, through the previous input stages of vocabulary and grammar learning.

Before discussing the textbook design in relation to the curriculum ideas on grammar teaching presented in section 4.3.2B of this chapter, the four main ideas are recapitulated again below to provide a basis for analysing the textbooks and see if they adhere to these principles.

- (a) Grammar is best learnt or taught in context
- (b) Within the framework of task-based learning, grammar is a means to an end and it should not be taught as a system of rules or a stand-alone body of knowledge.
- (c) A variety of grammar teaching methods can be used. These include exercises or activities ranging from those consisting of discrete grammar items to those encouraging contextualised grammar practice.
- (d) Grammar teaching can take place at different stages of task-based teaching and learning, e.g. before a task, during a task, or after a task.

(Curriculum Development Council, 1999, 2002)

In general, the grammar teaching approach presented in the textbook appears quite compatible with the ideas on grammar teaching in the curriculum documents summarised above. Clearly, in the textbook material, grammar is intended to be taught in context (Idea a). The whole unit is focused on the theme of “Eating out”, with the grammar points and tasks all related to the main theme. Grammar is intended to be a means to an end rather than a system of rules or a stand-alone body of knowledge (Idea b), as it is mainly tackled in the pre-task input stage to build up students’ ability in making use of the structures to accomplish the tasks. To some extent, the textbook material also shows that a variety of grammar teaching methods can be used (Idea c). Grammar presentation appears similar in the “Language focus” sections of various units, where there are usually some dialogues illustrating ways that the structure can be used, with tables showing the occurrences of the structures in sentences, and sometimes explanatory notes on the usage of the structures. The grammar practice in the “Language practice & language roundup” sections looks more like exercises than tasks (according to the distinction made by Ellis, 2003), but at least they can be considered quite contextualised grammar practice. These exercises provide different types of guided practice such as cloze or sentence writing exercises contextualised somehow in short texts. The tasks at the end of the units provide opportunities for more authentic and contextualised production of the structures. The idea that grammar teaching can take place at different stages of task-based teaching and learning (Idea d) is only partially fulfilled in the material. According to the organisation of the textbook, grammar teaching can certainly take place before a task, as grammar most obviously features in the pre-task input stage, serving to scaffold students’ ability to make use of the structures in the final production stage of completing the tasks. Perhaps there is also an implication that grammar teaching can take place during a task, as students are guided in using the structures to complete the task, although there is no explicit indication of how the teacher should teach grammar during that stage. There is, however, no coverage of how grammar teaching is supposed to occur after a task, as the

units end with tasks but no further material to follow.

The way that grammar is presented in the textbook indicates that the task-based approach underlying it is a weak form rather than a strong form. According to Skehan's (1996) analysis, the task-based approach can take either a strong form or a weak form. A strong form considers tasks as the basic unit of teaching where meaning is paramount, while a weak form considers tasks as a vital part of language instruction but one that is embedded in a more complex pedagogical context. Where the need arises to facilitate task performance, the tasks can be preceded or followed by form-focused instruction. Although including quite authentic, meaningful tasks at the end of the unit, the textbook material allows for a variety of form-focused activities in the input stage, some of which may not be fully integrated into the task context. In fact, traditional PPP-type grammar exercises are still used quite often as grammar input to facilitate the completion of the tasks. Therefore, it can be concluded that a weak form rather than a strong form of the task-based approach is endorsed.

Many secondary schools also use supplementary grammar books to supplement the grammar teaching materials in the textbooks, or they may stock them in school libraries for teachers' reference or adaptation for supplementary materials, or for students' reference or extra practice. The grammar teaching and learning approaches underlying these grammar books may have an impact on those endorsed in the textbooks or vice versa. In fact, both types of books may mutually influence each other, and a close analysis and comparison of them will give a more comprehensive picture of the integration of grammar teaching into the task-based curriculum.

In the next section, the current grammar teaching approach as presented in the supplementary grammar books for secondary schools will be examined to show whether

they are influenced by the curriculum ideas and the task-based approach. They are also compared to the general SLA grammar books discussed in Chapter 2 to show whether locally based materials use similar strategies of integrating grammar teaching into the task-based curriculum.

4.5 Current approaches of pedagogical grammar in supplementary grammar teaching materials

4.5.1 Methodology for selecting and analysing the HK grammar books

To complement the discussion on pedagogical grammar in SLA in section 2.5 of Chapter 2, this section will focus on the current pedagogical approach to grammar teaching in Hong Kong. As in section 2.5, this section also analyses the type of grammar books that contain both grammar presentation/explanations and practice exercises/activities. The books discussed in section 2.5 are intermediate/advanced grammar books for general SL learners, while the 18 grammar books selected for analysis in this section are used as supplementary references or teaching materials in Hong Kong secondary schools, and they are stocked in two of the largest chain textbook-sellers. They have been selected for analysis based on the following selection criteria:

1. A total of four bookshops, two from each of the two largest chain book-sellers, The Commercial Press and Joint Publishing, have been surveyed. The Commercial Press has a total of 20 bookshops in Hong Kong, while Joint Publishing has a total of 16. School textbooks and supplementary materials are sold in most of these bookshops.
2. These bookshops have open shelves on supplementary materials for primary and secondary schools.⁸ I examined the relevant books in four bookshops and compiled a

⁸ Schools usually purchase supplementary teaching materials as a teacher resource, or stock them in school libraries for student reference. A small number may also be used as designated supplementary materials to be used in class. Teachers may adapt or extract these for use in class, or students may be asked to purchase them. Besides classroom use, these books may also be purchased by individual students or parents for additional practice.

list of grammar books which may be used by secondary schools. Most of these are sold in all four bookshops, although a small number are sold in only one or two of them.

3. Only grammar books which involve grammar as the main focus have been examined. Books which include some grammar discussion while focusing on other skills like reading, writing or listening were excluded. Reference-type grammar books for checking up structures which do not have a practice section were not examined; neither were grammar books which focus on only one or two specific structures such as prepositions, phrasal verbs or tenses.

An assessment continuum similar to the one in Table 2.1 in Chapter 2 was used again to assess these grammar books in five areas: grammar presentation, contextualisation, use of grammatical metalanguage, practice, and interest and variety. Each of these areas are rated on a continuum of five levels, with “grammar-oriented or form-focused” on one end and “task-oriented or meaning-focused” on the other. Although the 5-level framework was finally replaced by a 4-level framework in the assessment in Chapter 2, I decided to try it out again this time, as there were a larger number of books which might call for a wider spread of scores across different levels.

A trial run of assessment rendered similar results as the initial analysis of the SLA grammar books, where none of the books could be put under Level 5. This shows that just like the SLA grammar books, the Hong Kong grammar books cannot be really task-based. The same solution as that described in Chapter 2 was used to address the problem, that is, by reducing five levels to four levels.

Repeated assessments still showed small discrepancies, especially between two close/neighbouring levels. As a larger number of books were involved in this assessment,

it was perhaps inadequate to decide on their levels of being grammar-based or task-based just by comparing them with each other. A more structured set of criteria with specific descriptors for each level was developed. It was drafted and tried out on assessing the books, and then revised after considering the discrepancies in the assessment scores. The finalised version is presented in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2 Descriptors of assessment criteria for grammar books

A. Contextualisation (discrete versus contextualised approach)

This area applies to the overall approach underlying the material in the presentation of grammar explanation and practice.

1. No or nearly no context in presenting grammar in both the presentation and practice sections. Examples are often standalone sentences.
2. Quite decontextualised. Explanation or practice is occasionally presented in the context of short paragraphs or dialogues.
3. Some form(s) of context are used which may be incomplete or not used consistently throughout the unit.
4. Quite consistently contextualised, showing an attempt to present grammar around a theme like a chapter in a task-based textbook.

B. Grammar presentation (deductive/explanation versus inductive/use)

This area applies to the overall approach underlying the material in the presentation of grammar explanation and practice.

1. Focused on direct explanation of rules (deductive) in the grammar presentation section; explanation often precedes practice; and the division line between these two sections is clear.
2. Explanation receives comparatively more attention than practice.

3. Practice receives comparatively more attention than explanation.
4. Focused on practice rather than explanation; explanation is supplemented with examples that allow learners to find out how the rules can be used (inductive); practice sometimes or often precedes explanation; or the division between the presentation and practice sections is unclear, or they alternate in short sections.

C. Use of grammatical metalanguage (heavy versus light)

This area focuses on the use of grammatical terminology (mainly in the grammar presentation/explanation part of the material).

1. Heavy use of both familiar or unfamiliar grammatical terms.
2. Quite frequent use of grammatical terms.
3. Some use of mostly familiar grammatical terms.
4. Occasional use of grammatical terms. Explanation is largely based on examples.

D. Practice (controlled versus free)

This area focuses on the practice (exercise and production) part of the materials.

1. Heavily guided and objective exercises which do not require authentic production of language of longer than a few words.
2. Mostly guided and objective exercises, with some highly controlled sentence transformation exercises.
3. Some short guided writing of complete sentences which allow a little authentic use of the language.
4. Some short guided writing of short paragraphs, dialogues or other types of texts of a few lines or a little longer according to given contexts.

E. Interest and variety (low versus high)

This area applies to the overall style of the whole set of materials (including both presentation and practice).

1. Lack of variety in materials and activities (e.g. monotonous explanation of rules and/or mechanical exercises for drilling) with no attempt to make them visually appealing (e.g. with graphics or illustrations) in both the explanation and practice sections.
2. Quite monotonous and mechanical explanation and exercises; attempts on attractive/interesting layout or design are mainly for decorative purposes.
3. Quite variegated, interesting and visually appealing materials for both grammar explanation and practice exercises/activities.
4. Inclusion of a variety of materials and activities which are interesting and visually appealing (e.g. with graphics or illustrations) in both the explanation and practice sections; the attractive design and layout integrate well with the explanation and practice.

The 18 grammar books were re-assessed according to the finalised assessment criteria and descriptors for another two or three times, until the scores for the last two assessments were very close and I was confident of similar scores if I had to re-assess them later. The final results were recorded in five assessment sheets in Table 4.3 (a) to (e). The findings are presented below.

4.5.2 Findings from the HK grammar books analysis

Table 4.3 (a) on the degree of contextualization shows that the majority of the grammar books are quite decontextualised, presenting grammar as discrete forms, with 14 out of 18

books having a score of 1 or 2. Only a small number have made an attempt to contextualise the presentation and practice somehow (2 books with a score of 3), or attain a relatively high level of contextualisation (2 books with a score of 4).

Table 4.3 (b) on grammar presentation shows that the majority of the grammar books are quite deductive in approach, putting emphasis on explanation before practice, with 13 out of 18 books having a score of 1 or 2. Only a number have made an attempt to be more inductive and use more examples (3 books with a score of 3), or attained a relatively more inductive approach (2 books with a score of 4).

Table 4.3 (c) on the use of grammatical metalanguage shows that the majority of the grammar books are positioned around the middle of the continuum, with 8 out of 18 books having a score of 2, and 7 out of 18 books having a score of 3. None of the books use very heavy metalanguage at a score of 1, but 3 of the books use relatively light metalanguage with a score of 4.

Table 4.3 (d) on the degree of controlled/free practice shows that the majority of the grammar books are positioned towards the left end of the continuum, with a high level of controlled practice, where 12 out of 18 books having a score of 1 or 2. While a number have provided some scope for less controlled practice (6 books with a score of 3), none of the books allow regular free writing of short texts or paragraphs at a score of 4.

Table 4.3 (e) on interest and variety shows that the grammar books are relatively more evenly distributed between the two ends of the continuum, compared to the other four areas. While 11 of the books show a relatively low degree of interest and variety (with a score of 1 or 2), 7 of the books show quite a high level (with a score of 4).

Table 4.3 Assessment of Hong Kong grammar books

(a) Contextualisation

Discrete
approach

Contextualised
approach



<i>No.</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Publisher</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
1	Grammar for Junior Forms 1-3 *	Goodman Publisher	1997	✓			
2	English Examiner for Junior Forms 1A-3B *	Goodman Publisher	1998	✓			
3	Teach Yourself Grammar for Junior Forms 1-3 *	Goodman Publisher	2004	✓			
4	Effective Grammar Tests 1-3 *	Goodman Publisher	2005	✓			
5	Classroom Grammar for Secondary Students S1-S3	Classroom Publications	2008			✓	
6	Graded Exercises in English 1-3	Witman Publishing	1978-80	✓			
7	Active Grammar 1-2	Witman Publishing	1991		✓		
8	New Exercises in English 1-3	Aristo Educational Press	1999		✓		
9	Target English for Excellence 1-3	Excellence Publishing	1999		✓		
10	Amazing English Practical Grammar Graded Exercises 1-2	Junius Publications	2007		✓		
11	Grammar Explained 1-3	Longman	2000				✓
12	Easy Grammar 1-3	Longman	1998				✓
13	Mastering Basic English Usage 1-3	Martindale Press	1985-88		✓		
14	The Big Secondary English Book *	Mindworks & Systems	2006		✓		
15	Concise English Grammar *	Original Press	2004	✓			
16	Grammar in Context 1-3	Rivera Press	1995		✓		
17	Grammar Made Easy 1-3	Federal Publications	1996			✓	
18	Grammar Builder 1-3	Multi-Link (Singapore)	2009		✓		

* With Chinese translations (for grammatical terms, grammar explanation or vocabulary)

Table 4.3 Assessment of Hong Kong grammar books

(b) Grammar presentation

Deductive/ Explanation	Inductive/ Use
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No.	Title	Publisher	Year	1	2	3	4
1	Grammar for Junior Forms 1-3 *	Goodman Publisher	1997	✓			
2	English Examiner for Junior Forms 1A-3B *	Goodman Publisher	1998	✓			
3	Teach Yourself Grammar for Junior Forms 1-3 *	Goodman Publisher	2004	✓			
4	Effective Grammar Tests 1-3 *	Goodman Publisher	2005	✓			
5	Classroom Grammar for Secondary Students S1-S3	Classroom Publications	2008			✓	
6	Graded Exercises in English 1-3	Witman Publishing	1978-80	✓			
7	Active Grammar 1-2	Witman Publishing	1991		✓		
8	New Exercises in English 1-3	Aristo Educational Press	1999		✓		
9	Target English for Excellence 1-3	Excellence Publishing	1999			✓	
10	Amazing English Practical Grammar Graded Exercises 1-2	Junius Publications	2007		✓		
11	Grammar Explained 1-3	Longman	2000				✓
12	Easy Grammar 1-3	Longman	1998				✓
13	Mastering Basic English Usage 1-3	Martindale Press	1985-88	✓			
14	The Big Secondary English Book *	Mindworks & Systems	2006		✓		
15	Concise English Grammar *	Original Press	2004	✓			
16	Grammar in Context 1-3	Rivera Press	1995		✓		
17	Grammar Made Easy 1-3	Federal Publications	1996			✓	
18	Grammar Builder 1-3	Multi-Link (Singapore)	2009	✓			

* With Chinese translations (for grammatical terms, grammar explanation or vocabulary)

Table 4.3 Assessment of Hong Kong grammar books
(c) Use of grammatical metalanguage

Heavy use of metalanguage	Light use of metalanguage
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No.	Title	Publisher	Year	↓			
				1	2	3	4
1	Grammar for Junior Forms 1-3 *	Goodman Publisher	1997		✓		
2	English Examiner for Junior Forms 1A-3B *	Goodman Publisher	1998		✓		
3	Teach Yourself Grammar for Junior Forms 1-3 *	Goodman Publisher	2004		✓		
4	Effective Grammar Tests 1-3 *	Goodman Publisher	2005		✓		
5	Classroom Grammar for Secondary Students S1-S3	Classroom Publications	2008			✓	
6	Graded Exercises in English 1-3	Witman Publishing	1978-80			✓	
7	Active Grammar 1-2	Witman Publishing	1991		✓		
8	New Exercises in English 1-3	Aristo Educational Press	1999			✓	
9	Target English for Excellence 1-3	Excellence Publishing	1999			✓	
10	Amazing English Practical Grammar Graded Exercises 1-2	Junius Publications	2007			✓	
11	Grammar Explained 1-3	Longman	2000				✓
12	Easy Grammar 1-3	Longman	1998				✓
13	Mastering Basic English Usage 1-3	Martindale Press	1985-88			✓	
14	The Big Secondary English Book *	Mindworks & Systems	2006		✓		
15	Concise English Grammar *	Original Press	2004		✓		
16	Grammar in Context 1-3	Rivera Press	1995		✓		
17	Grammar Made Easy 1-3	Federal Publications	1996				✓
18	Grammar Builder 1-3	Multi-Link (Singapore)	2009			✓	

* With Chinese translations (for grammatical terms, grammar explanation or vocabulary)

Table 4.3 Assessment of Hong Kong grammar books

(d) Practice/Production

Controlled
practice

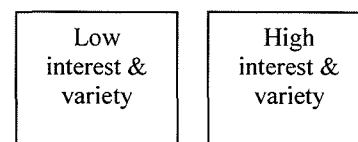
Free
practice



No.	Title	Publisher	Year	1	2	3	4
1	Grammar for Junior Forms 1-3 *	Goodman Publisher	1997	✓			
2	English Examiner for Junior Forms 1A-3B *	Goodman Publisher	1998	✓			
3	Teach Yourself Grammar for Junior Forms 1-3 *	Goodman Publisher	2004		✓		
4	Effective Grammar Tests 1-3 *	Goodman Publisher	2005		✓		
5	Classroom Grammar for Secondary Students S1-S3	Classroom Publications	2008		✓		
6	Graded Exercises in English 1-3	Witman Publishing	1978-80	✓			
7	Active Grammar 1-2	Witman Publishing	1991		✓		
8	New Exercises in English 1-3	Aristo Educational Press	1999			✓	
9	Target English for Excellence 1-3	Excellence Publishing	1999	✓			
10	Amazing English Practical Grammar Graded Exercises 1-2	Junius Publications	2007		✓		
11	Grammar Explained 1-3	Longman	2000			✓	
12	Easy Grammar 1-3	Longman	1998			✓	
13	Mastering Basic English Usage 1-3	Martindale Press	1985-88		✓		
14	The Big Secondary English Book *	Mindworks & Systems	2006			✓	
15	Concise English Grammar *	Original Press	2004			✓	
16	Grammar in Context 1-3	Rivera Press	1995		✓		
17	Grammar Made Easy 1-3	Federal Publications	1996			✓	
18	Grammar Builder 1-3	Multi-Link (Singapore)	2009		✓		

* With Chinese translations (for grammatical terms, grammar explanation or vocabulary)

Table 4.3 Assessment of Hong Kong grammar books
(e) Interest and variety



No.	Title	Publisher	Year	1	2	3	4
1	Grammar for Junior Forms 1-3 *	Goodman Publisher	1997	✓			
2	English Examiner for Junior Forms 1A-3B *	Goodman Publisher	1998	✓			
3	Teach Yourself Grammar for Junior Forms 1-3 *	Goodman Publisher	2004	✓			
4	Effective Grammar Tests 1-3 *	Goodman Publisher	2005	✓			
5	Classroom Grammar for Secondary Students S1-S3	Classroom Publications	2008				✓
6	Graded Exercises in English 1-3	Witman Publishing	1978-80	✓			
7	Active Grammar 1-2	Witman Publishing	1991		✓		
8	New Exercises in English 1-3	Aristo Educational Press	1999			✓	
9	Target English for Excellence 1-3	Excellence Publishing	1999			✓	
10	Amazing English Practical Grammar Graded Exercises 1-2	Junius Publications	2007		✓		
11	Grammar Explained 1-3	Longman	2000				✓
12	Easy Grammar 1-3	Longman	1998				✓
13	Mastering Basic English Usage 1-3	Martindale Press	1985-88	✓			
14	The Big Secondary English Book *	Mindworks & Systems	2006		✓		
15	Concise English Grammar *	Original Press	2004	✓			
16	Grammar in Context 1-3	Rivera Press	1995			✓	
17	Grammar Made Easy 1-3	Federal Publications	1996			✓	
18	Grammar Builder 1-3	Multi-Link (Singapore)	2009		✓		

* With Chinese translations (for grammatical terms, grammar explanation or vocabulary)

Table 4.4 Summary of scores and numbers of editions/reprints for Hong Kong grammar books

<i>No.</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Publisher</i>	<i>Year of first ed</i>	<i>Year of latest ed/rep</i>	<i>Total ed/rep</i>	<i>Aver. score</i>
1	Grammar for Junior Forms 1-3 *	Goodman Publisher	1997	2007-9	3-8	1.2
2	English Examiner for Junior Forms 1A-3B *	Goodman Publisher	1998	2006-9	4-11	1.2
3	Teach Yourself Grammar for Junior Forms 1-3 *	Goodman Publisher	2004	2007-10	2-5	1.4
4	Effective Grammar Tests 1-3 *	Goodman Publisher	2005	2009-10	5-6	1.4
5	Classroom Grammar for Secondary Students S1-S3	Classroom Publications	2008	2008	2 or more#	3.2
6	Graded Exercises in English 1-3	Witman Publishing	1978-80	2004	21	1.4
7	Active Grammar 1-2	Witman Publishing	1991	2006	11-13	2.0
8	New Exercises in English 1-3	Aristo Educational Press	1984, 92, 99	2009	12	2.6
9	Target English for Excellence 1-3	Excellence Publishing	1999	2006	2 or more#	2.4
10	Amazing English Practical Grammar Graded Exercises 1-2	Junius Publications	2007	2007	1 or more#	2.2
11	Grammar Explained 1-3	Longman	1993, 2000	2009	13-15	3.8
12	Easy Grammar 1-3	Longman	1998	2009	11-14	3.8
13	Mastering Basic English Usage 1-3	Martindale Press	1985-88	2006-9	10-13	1.8
14	The Big Secondary English Book *	Mindworks & Systems	2006	2006-10	1-2	2.2
15	Concise English Grammar *	Original Press	2002, 03, 04	2010	9	1.6
16	Grammar in Context 1-3	Rivera Press	1995-97	2009	2-5	2.2
17	Grammar Made Easy 1-3	Federal Publications	1996	2005	6	3.2
18	Grammar Builder 1-3	Multi-Link (Singapore)	2001, 09	2009	10	2.0

* *With Chinese translations (for grammatical terms, grammar explanation or vocabulary)*

Unclear information of number of editions/reprints on the book

Assessment sheets listing the 18 grammar books with scores according to the assessment criteria are presented in Table 4.3 (a) to (e). Table 4.4 presents the summary of the average scores of the books for the five assessment areas, as well as the number of editions each book has published. The average score in the last column refers to the average of all the five scores in Table 4.3 (a) to (e). A lower score indicates a position closer to the left end of the continuum of grammar-based/form-focused approach, while a higher score indicates a position closer to the right end of the continuum of task-based/meaning-focused approach.

Quite a few of the books in the list look like *Effective Grammar Tests* (No. 4), which has an average score of 1.4 (as shown in Table 4.4). With an average score towards the left side of the continuum, this book is generally quite grammar-based. As can be seen in Appendix 4.9 (a), the grammar material is made up of a presentation section on grammar explanation, and a practice section on controlled exercises. It follows the traditional PPP structure where the presentation of rules and forms precedes guided practice, although there is no production section allowing for more authentic use of the structures. The overall approach is quite grammar-based, with a score of 1 or 2 in all the five aspects. The book is generally organised deductively, with distinct sections for explaining the grammatical rules and forms, although quite a few examples are given. The practice sections consist of quite discrete and controlled cloze and sentence-rewriting exercises. Both the presentation of structures and the practice are decontextualised. The use of metalanguage is quite heavy compared to the other books, with a score of 2. Some Chinese translations are used, such as the one for the grammatical term “quantifying adjectives”. There is an attempt to include illustrations occasionally to make the material more interesting, but these are not well-integrated into the grammar explanation and the practice exercises.

At the other end of the more task-based materials is the book *Easy Grammar* (No.12), which has an average score of 3.8 (with a score of 3 or 4 in the five aspects). It does not follow the traditional PPP structure to start each unit with the presentation of rules and forms. Instead, the material is organised quite inductively, starting with a communicative activity to expose learners to ways of using prepositions. This is followed by a variety of other exercises, activities or examples, with only occasional and short direct explanations of grammatical points. The materials are presented in a contextualised way, as explanation and practice are related to real-life situations, illustrated by attractive graphics. The layout of the units and the approach for organising the material are comparable to the task-based textbooks by the same publisher,⁹ although the textbooks organise the materials according to real-life topics instead of grammar topics.

There are a number of books in the middle range of having grammar-based or task-based features. For example, the book *Target English for Excellence* (No. 9) (Appendix 4.9 (c)), receives a middle average score of 2.4. Although the material is quite decontextualised (with a score of 2), grammar presentation is organised quite inductively, and quite a high level of interest and variety is also shown in material design and layout; the use of metalanguage is also quite light (the book has a score of 3 in these three aspects). However, practice in the books tends more towards the grammar-based end of the continuum (with a score of 1), as mostly highly controlled and objective exercises are included.

To summarise briefly, the data show that most of the books have both grammar-based and task-based features. As shown in Table 4.3 (a) to (e), there are fewer books towards the right end of the assessment continuum, indicating that the books are generally more

⁹ The two textbooks *Longman Target English* and *Longman Express* were used by most of the teachers in this study. A sample unit in *Longman Express 1A* is included in Appendix 4.8.

grammar-based than task-based, although task-based features are also evident. They are quite deductive and decontextualised, while there is a tendency to use light metalanguage, and to incorporate more visually appealing materials and activities to enhance interest. Practice is quite controlled, with none of the books attaining a score of 4 for practice/production.

Table 4.5, which summarises the average scores and presents the number of editions and reprints, may give some hints about how these grammar books are received by schools and students. The average scores in the last column indicate that the range of the average scores for the 18 grammar books are from 1.2 to 3.8 on the grammar-based/form-focused and task-based/meaning-focused continuum. The number of editions/reprints may indicate the level of popularity. Although there is no information for the exact number of printed or sold copies, the need for reprinting or publishing new editions usually indicates that there is a demand for the books which exceeds the existing supply. Comparing the average assessment scores on the levels of grammar-based and task-based elements to the number of editions/reprints shows that while there are a few books with high assessment scores and high numbers of editions/reprints (such as No. 11 and 12), there are also some books with low assessment scores and high numbers of editions/reprints (such as No. 1, 2, 4 and 6). This indicates that both grammar-oriented and task-oriented grammar books may be favoured by some schools or students. The more recently published books also include both types, showing a demand for grammar books of different approaches. Chinese translations are also used in some books for grammatical terms and grammatical explanations. Books with Chinese translations seem to be quite popular, as shown in the number of editions/reprints (No. 1, 2, 4 and 15).

4.5.3 Comparison of SLA and HK grammar books

The results of this analysis of the grammar books in Hong Kong can be compared to the analysis of the grammar books for SLA in section 2.5 of Chapter 2, in the following aspects: contextualisation of the material; grammar presentation; use of metalanguage; practice or production; and interest and variety. Table 4.5 presents a comparison of the two types of grammar books to show the distribution of scores and the average scores for the five areas of comparison.

Table 4.5 Comparison of SLA and Hong Kong grammar books

<i>Areas*</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Level 1</i>	<i>Level 2</i>	<i>Level 3</i>	<i>Level 4</i>	<i>Aver. score</i>
Area A	SLA books	36%	29%	21%	14%	2.14
	HK books	33%	45%	11%	11%	2.00
Area B	SLA books	21%	36%	29%	14%	2.36
	HK books	44%	28%	17%	11%	1.89
Area C	SLA books	36%	0%	43%	21%	2.50
	HK books	0%	44%	39%	17%	2.78
Area D	SLA books	29%	14%	21%	36%	2.29
	HK books	22%	45%	33%	0%	2.22
Area E	SLA books	14%	21%	36%	29%	2.79
	HK books	39%	22%	22%	17%	2.28

** These refer to the five areas of assessment in the assessment continuum first presented in Table 2.1 (Chapter 2): A. Contextualisation, B. Grammar presentation, C. Use of grammatical metalanguage, D. Practice or production, and E. Interest and variety.*

Results from the table indicate that the scores for the SLA grammar books are generally higher than the Hong Kong (HK) grammar books, which means SLA books have comparatively higher task-based tendencies. Scores of SLA books are also generally more evenly distributed across the four levels. The HK grammar books, on the other hand, have a tendency to spread towards the grammar-based end on the continuum.

In the area of contextualisation (Areas A), the scores for the SLA books are

comparatively more evenly spread compared to the HK books, most of which (78%) show a tendency for being decontextualised (with a score of 1 or 2).

A similar tendency for the SLA books to be evenly distributed across different levels is also evident in the area of grammar presentation (Area B), compared to 72% of the HK books which tend towards the deductive side. The difference in the average scores of these two types of books in this area is the second highest of the five areas.

Metalanguage is the only area in which HK books have a higher average score than SLA books. Although there is a stronger tendency for most of the SLA books to use lighter metalanguage (Areas C) (with 64% on the lighter side for Area C), there are also a considerable number of books (36%) which receive a score of 1 for using the heaviest metalanguage. HK books use generally light metalanguage, with 56% on the light side. Although the rest of the books use slightly heavier metalanguage, no HK book receives a score of 1.

In the area of practice/production (Area D), the scores for the SLA books are again comparatively more evenly distributed compared to the HK books. Practice exercises or activities are highly controlled in HK books, with 67% of them having a score of either 1 or 2. On the other hand, less controlled practice occur more often in a number SLA books (57%), although a considerable number of these (43%) are also quite controlled.

Variety and interest (Area E) is an area with the greatest difference in the average scores of the two types of books, at 2.79 for SLA books compared to 2.28 for Hong Kong books. SLA books show an obvious tendency to demonstrate a higher level of interest and variety compared to HK books.

Compared to the grammar books for SLA, Hong Kong grammar books seem to have a stronger grammar-based tendency. They are generally more decontextualised, more deductive, although the use of metalanguage is quite light. Practice/production is more controlled, and the materials design also show less interest and variety. There is also a stronger tendency for scores to concentrate in certain levels, which indicates that the HK grammar books are more homogeneous compared to SLA books.

The SLA books, on the other hand, are generally more evenly spread across different levels in most areas, indicating their tendency to be more heterogeneous in various aspects. There are varying levels of grammar-based and task-based elements in the five areas of investigation. They also show an overall tendency to include more task-based features compared to the HK books. In short, the SLA books show more influence of the task-based approach in current English language teaching pedagogy compared to the Hong Kong grammar materials, which seem to lag behind the most up to date developments in language teaching.

The Hong Kong grammar materials demonstrate some local characteristics of their own, which differentiate them from the general SLA grammar books. They adhere more closely to the traditional PPP structure, often beginning with the presentation of grammatical rules and forms followed by guided practice, without much or any material that allows for more authentic production. In fact, emphasis is often placed on the practice section with little grammatical explanation. The materials are mostly deductively organised and quite decontextualised. They seldom begin with reading passages or activities for using the language prior to analysing it, as in some of the SLA grammar books with an intention to “contextualise” grammar teaching.

Another special feature is the Chinese translations used in some of the books (in 6 out of

18), although the translations are not too heavy in most of them. The translations are used not only for grammar explanations and metalanguage. Some examples of sentences or expressions are also translated (sample material in Appendix 4.10). Teachers in Hong Kong are expected to use mostly English in their classrooms and the use of Chinese translations is not encouraged. These books can be used as supplementary materials to fill the needs of some lower level learners who may find the analysis of grammar in English too difficult for them.

4.5.4 Limitation of approach for assessing and comparing the grammar books

It is hard to quantify the levels of being grammar-based or task-based, as the differences are often qualitative in nature. The simple statistics used in this survey mainly serve descriptive purposes to assist conceptualisation rather than having absolute values on their own.

Undoubtedly, this type of assessment of the SLA and Hong Kong grammar books was subjective. Some of the books are not consistent in their levels of being grammar-based or task-based throughout the whole book, and I had to make difficult decisions on assigning the appropriate scores. The degree of being task-based is also conceptually fuzzy, as grammar books can never be really like task-based textbooks. It is a tendency rather than a clear-cut qualification.

The comparison of the two types of grammar books was not really clear-cut either. The two sets of books have different users and cannot really be compared on equal footing. The SLA grammar books are intended for more advanced users and this may have an impact on how grammar-based or task-based elements are incorporated in these books.

Reliability in rating the grammar books would have been enhanced if the ratings had been cross-checked by a second rater for possible inaccuracy or systematic bias. However, the amount of workload involved and the level of immersion in grammar teaching and task-based research required for such a person have made this unlikely within the constraints of this small piece of individual research.

The grammar book surveys have shown how the task-based approach has found its way to create an impact on the originally grammar-based books, and how task-based and grammar-based elements in these books make adjustments to accommodate diverging features. Overall, there is a mixture of tradition and change in the organisation and design of the locally-based supplementary grammar teaching materials. Although most of the grammar materials look quite homogeneous in general, there is also a tendency to use more variegated materials and to attend to interest and motivation in the organisation and design of the materials and exercises, as well as attending to the more special needs of the Hong Kong students. This somehow also corresponds to the use of a “more eclectic and multi-faceted approach” of the SLA grammar books described in Chapter 2. The grammar teaching materials in Hong Kong also reflect different strategies of accommodating form and meaning in the teaching and learning of grammar, an effort which also applies generally to the grammar teaching materials in SLA and grammar teaching in TBLT. A more complete picture of strategies for tackling the tension between form and meaning can be drawn by further exploring the ways that grammar is taught in task-based classrooms.

4.6 Chapter summary

This chapter explores different principles underlying the ELT curriculum in Hong Kong. It analyses the curriculum ideas on grammar teaching, traces the sources of these ideas from SLA theories and research and examines how they are transmitted to teacher training materials and teaching materials.

The grammar teaching approaches underlying the school textbooks are on the whole compatible with those suggested in the curriculum documents, although only a small number of a wide variety of strategies put forward in the curriculum documents seem to be operationalised in the textbooks. Generally, the approach can be described as a weak form of the task-based approach, with traces of the traditional PPP approach, although in modified forms.

The supplementary grammar teaching materials in Hong Kong also reflect strategies of accommodating the conflicting demands of tradition and change, as well as form and meaning. Compared to the grammar books for SLA, Hong Kong grammar books seem to be more homogeneous and traditional in adhering to the PPP principles. Most of them tend to put more emphasis on guided practice and quite a number are still focused on discrete drills. However, there has also been an evident attempt to include more contextualised and variegated materials and activities.

The examination of the curriculum and teaching materials serves the purpose of providing a comprehensive context for investigating the views and practice of individual teachers on grammar teaching. The next two chapters will present the research design and data analysis on an empirical study which examines individual teachers' perceptions and practice of grammar teaching in Hong Kong.

Chapter 5 Research design and methodology for the classroom empirical study

5.1 Introduction

The first part of this study presented in the previous chapters explores the contextual factors for grammar teaching by examining SLA theories and research, the local educational contexts, curriculum ideas and their transmission to teaching resources and materials. It consists of heterogeneous data collected by literature surveys and documentary analyses to answer the first three research questions of this study.

Question 1: What does recent theory and research say about the teaching of grammar?

Question 2: What do Hong Kong curriculum documents say about the teaching of grammar?

Question 3: To what extent do teaching materials reflect theoretical, research and curricular guidance?

These are the first three subsidiary questions under the main research question addressed in this study: How is grammar teaching perceived and practised within the task-based secondary curriculum in Hong Kong?

The data collected in response to the first three research questions provided a context for investigating specifically how individual teachers perceive and practice grammar teaching in their classrooms. The findings in the first part of the study are reported in chapters 2 to 4. While Chapter 2 is a general survey of grammar teaching in second language acquisition, Chapters 3 and 4 focus on the specific context of Hong Kong to provide evidence which will be drawn on later to establish the relationships between the

intended and enacted curricula.

This chapter (Chapter 5) starts the second part of the investigation which was addressed by an empirical study making use of classroom observations and teacher interviews. The chapter first discusses the research design and methodology for collecting and analysing data for the empirical study. It then reports the results of a pilot study and the subsequent modifications of the research instruments to be used in the main study.

The following is the fourth subsidiary question that the empirical study investigated, and the findings are presented in Chapter 6:

Question 4: How do individual teachers in Hong Kong perceive and practice grammar teaching?

The last subsidiary question involves both parts of the study:

Question 5: What do the answers to the above subsidiary questions suggest about
grammar pedagogy within TBLT for the Hong Kong secondary English
curriculum?

This subsidiary question, which was addressed by the data from both parts of the study, is discussed near the end of this thesis in Chapters 7 and 8 to provide a comprehensive picture of the grammar teaching concepts and practice in the Hong Kong secondary curriculum.

5.2 Overall research design

This study investigates grammar teaching concepts and practice across different sectors of the English language teaching discipline in relation to the secondary English language

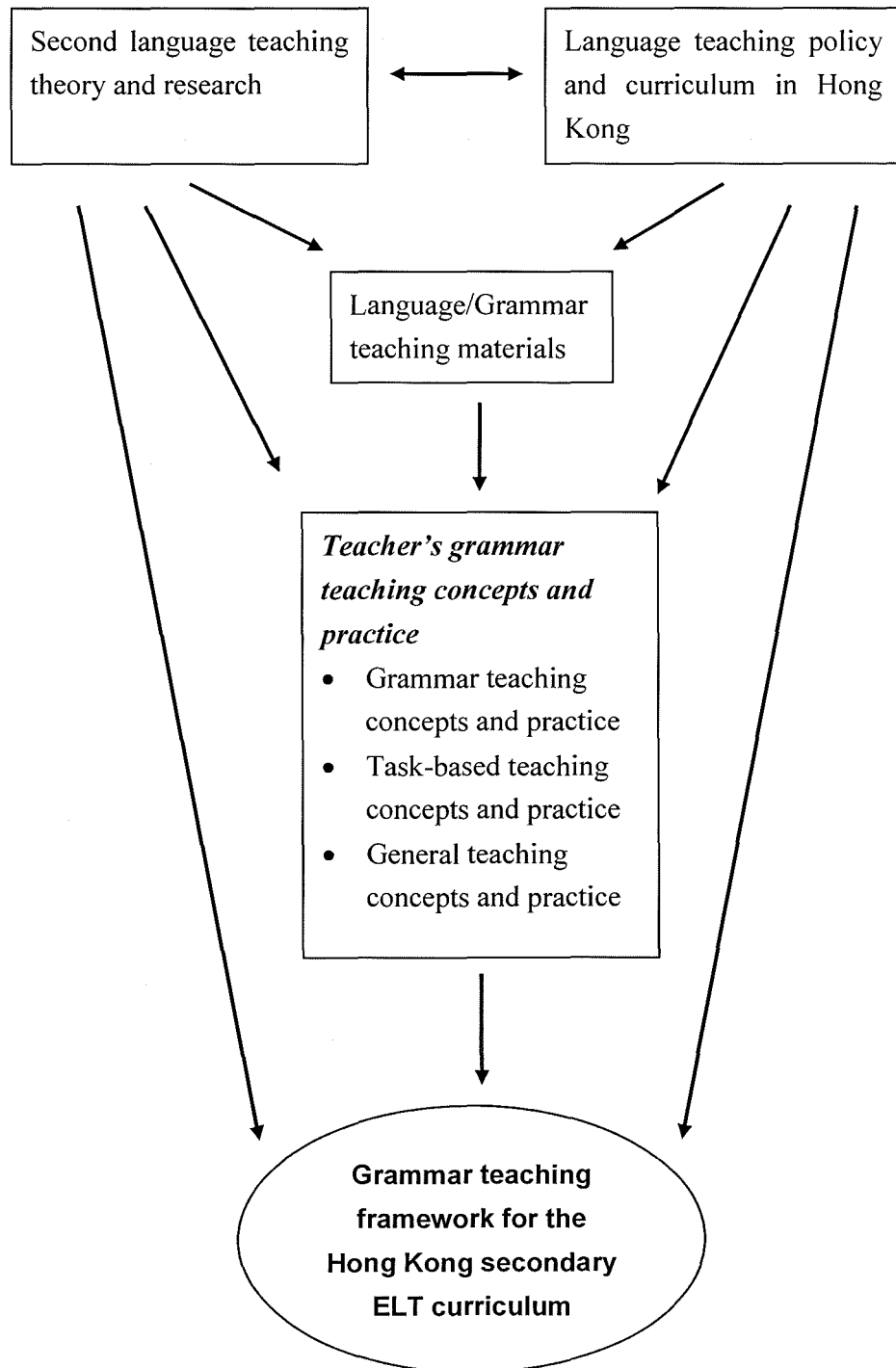
curriculum. Data on individual teaching practice and concepts were collected through lesson observations of individual grammar teaching practice in the classrooms, supplemented by interviews to collect teachers' views on what they did. However, this study goes beyond the more immediately accessible concepts and practice from the classrooms to investigate the wider contexts which may contribute to shape them. How teachers perceive and practice grammar teaching is often closely linked to the wider contexts of research, theory, policy and curricular guidance. Their teaching concepts and practice may also interact with the teaching materials they use. Teaching materials, on the other hand, are the products of how publishers interpret theory and policy. It is the purpose of this study to try to explore all these areas and see how they may possibly be linked with the concepts and practice of individual teachers.

To show the connection between different sectors of the English language teaching discipline, a conceptual framework for linking various factors was developed as a general guide to data collection and analysis, as shown in Figure 5.1. The boxes at the top of the diagram depict two major contributory sources of grammar teaching concepts within TBLT in Hong Kong, from language teaching theory and research on the one hand, to language teaching policy and curriculum on the other. The arrows indicate the multi-directional transmission of these ideas to teaching materials as well as individual teachers.

Just below the two boxes at the top is a small box representing language/grammar teaching materials, which receives ideas from the two areas represented by boxes above it. Ideas from language/grammar teaching materials, as well as those from the top two areas are then transmitted to the big box in the centre of the diagram, representing how grammar teaching is practised and perceived by individual teachers. These concepts and practice are delineated as having different levels of specificity, from the more specific

grammar teaching and task-based concepts and practice, to the more general perspective of general teaching concepts and practice. Possible interactions or connection of ideas from these various areas are indicated by the arrows pointing to each other.

Figure 5.1 Conceptual framework for analysing grammar teaching in the Hong Kong secondary curriculum



Arrows from the four boxes also point to the oval at the bottom of the diagram, that is, the grammar teaching framework for the Hong Kong secondary ELT curriculum. It is hoped that ideas from the four major areas of investigation can provide insights into the gradual development of a grammar teaching framework for the Hong Kong secondary ELT curriculum for informing grammar teaching pedagogy. This part of the diagram draws together data from various sources to inform theory, practice, policy and research in grammar teaching for Hong Kong secondary schools. A proposed grammar teaching framework will be presented in Chapter 7. The implications for the future direction of grammar teaching will be further discussed in the last two chapters of this thesis.

To capture this wide spectrum of perspectives concerning the teaching of grammar across different sectors of the English language teaching discipline, different types of research methods need to be adopted. Two major types of data were collected for this study. The first type was based on literature review and materials analysis. Ideas and views were collected from the wider educational contexts of second language theory and research, the English language curriculum as well as educational policies and developments in Hong Kong. These were presented in Chapters 2 and 3. Grammar teaching materials and teacher training materials related to grammar teaching were also analysed in Chapter 4. The second type was empirical data collected from lesson observations and interviews concerning how individual teachers perceive and practise grammar teaching. This chapter will present the research design for collecting and analysing the second type of data.

The research design of this study is grounded on theories of educational research. A number of researchers have distinguished three broad types of social and educational research approaches which are positivist, interpretive and critical (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Gubrium & Holstein, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). According to Cohen et al. (2007), the positivistic paradigms strive for objectivity, measurability, predictability,

controllability and causality. They try to extract simple relationships from a complex real world and frequently examine them as if time and context do not matter, and as if social life is stable rather than constantly changing (Denzin, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985, as cited in Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Clearly such a situation does not often apply to educational research, as education is often an arena without any objective reality. To redress the inadequacy of this approach, the interpretive/constructivist paradigms strive to understand and interpret the world in terms of its actors (Cohen et al., 2007). They examine meanings that have been socially constructed and consequently accept that values and views differ from place to place and group to group (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The third approach, the critical education research paradigm, regards the two previous paradigms as presenting incomplete accounts of social behaviour by neglecting political and ideological contexts of social and educational research. Its purpose is not merely to understand situations and phenomena but to change them in order to realise a society that is based on equality and democracy for all its members. As suggested by Thomas (1993, as cited in Rubin & Rubin, 1995), critical social researchers strive to discover flaws and faults in society by studying oppressed groups in order to promote actions that eliminate problems.

However, social and educational phenomena are sometimes too complex to be fully tackled by a single research approach, which can only render an incomplete picture of reality. In-depth studies often require a variety of different research methods to achieve multiple perspectives, which can be a combination of positivist, interactionist and constructivist approaches. Some researchers, such as Gorard and Taylor (2004) have described the need to combine research approaches for social and educational research. They argue that mixed methods can be used if they are focused on the same research aim, whether they are direct or indirect approaches, or quantitative and qualitative methods. The need for different methods depends on the needs of the investigation instead of the

personal preferences of the investigator.

It is the need for approaching the present study from different perspectives which calls for the use of multiple research methods. This investigation of the grammar teaching concepts and practice does not just target what individual teachers think and do in teaching grammar, but also the contexts they work in and related factors they interact with, such as the educational environment, the curriculum and the teaching materials. This study incorporates elements of both positivist and interpretive approaches. While creating an objective and systematic condition to collect reliable data using semi-structured methods for both the lesson observations and interviews, this study also allows meaning to emerge from the data collected out of specific contexts, instead of imposing a definitive *a priori* framework of preconceptions before the data collection process and making use of the data to test the validity of a prior academic theory. A considerable part of the study deals with perceptions and attitudes, which are hard to gauge by handling data with a positivist approach. Therefore, an interpretive approach is more often applied. Data collected for this study are to be considered not as hard facts, but as views which are subject to interpretation within specific contexts.

The different research instruments used in this study also serve the purpose of triangulation. Curriculum ideas were analysed to see if these were compatible with how the textbooks and teaching materials interpreted and incorporated them, and how they were perceived and implemented by teachers in their teaching practice. Teachers' concepts underlying their teaching practice were collected from the lessons and compared to their professed views about teaching in the interviews. Teaching concepts and practice from the naturalistic first lesson were compared to those in the semi-experimental second lesson with an intervention, to see if there were possible latent factors. The purpose was to put together a clear and comprehensive picture of teaching concepts and practice.

The research instruments used for collecting and analysing data will be explored in more detail in the next section.

5.3 Research instruments for the collection and analysis of data from the empirical study

Two major instruments were used for the empirical study: lesson observations and interviews. The interviews would be best conducted both before and after the lessons, so that comparisons could be made between lesson planning and implementation. However, school teachers had very heavy teaching timetables, which made it impossible to conduct both pre-lesson and post-lesson interviews close to the lesson for the effective collection of rich data. The solution was to conduct only the post-lesson interviews, which were comparatively more important in eliciting teachers' concepts and views based on what they had done in their lessons.

Each teacher received two observations and two follow-up interviews. One of the lessons was observed in a naturalistic condition without any intervention. The second lesson was semi-experimental, as the teacher was given an intervention in the form of a set of grammar teaching materials for use in his/her lessons.

5.3.1 Lesson observations and interviews

Observation is an objective and reliable means of data collection. As suggested by Cohen et al. (2007), using observation as a mode of research "has the potential to yield more valid or authentic data than would otherwise be the case with mediated or inferential methods" (p.396). For this empirical study, lesson observations were used as the fundamental instrument for data collection, while interviews evolved around them,

providing additional information, explanation and triangulation for the data collected from the lesson observations.

Two lesson observations were conducted on each of the teacher participants, which were supplemented by two in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted after each lesson. One of the lessons was observed in a naturalistic condition in which teachers taught grammar in their usual manner. The data gained from this lesson were supplemented and triangulated by data obtained from the second lesson, which was semi-experimental, as an intervention was applied to focus attention on grammar teaching. Teachers were asked to use a set of grammar teaching materials designed in line with the grammar teaching approach described or presented in the curriculum documents and textbooks. Data from the two lessons were compared to see if they were similar or different.

The teachers were also given an opportunity to respond to the set of provided materials in the interview and to voice their reactions to the researcher's conception of the grammar teaching approach. The intervention served the purpose of helping teachers to process and articulate their views and attitudes towards grammar teaching within the task-based curriculum at a deeper level. It acted as a stimulus to ensure that the teacher participants gave comprehensive coverage to various relevant issues related to grammar teaching. It is hoped that this intervention could also help teachers to reveal their more latent perceptions and attitudes underlying their grammar teaching practice. Since the materials might differ from what they normally used, they were likely to have interacted with it differently, stimulating the articulation of more diverse concepts of grammar teaching.

The lessons were not intended to be conducted according to certain *a priori* structure. A high level of autonomy was maintained in the ways the teacher participants taught their lessons for observation. The researcher made it clear to the teacher participants that they

could teach in any way they chose to, so long as some kind of grammar teaching was included in the lesson. It was also made clear to them that the lessons were best taught as they normally did in their classes. Although they were provided with a set of grammar materials to use in the second lessons, they did not need to follow them rigidly. They were given the liberty to skip, reorganise or change the order of any parts of the materials to suit their own teaching style as they considered appropriate.

Where ideas are not immediately decipherable from the way the teachers practise teaching, explanations can be sought in the post-lesson interviews. Data from the lessons can also be compared with those from the interviews for triangulation to see if they are consistent or discrepant.

Semi-structured methods were also adopted for conducting the teacher interviews, like a kind of guided conversation (Kvale 1996; Rubin and Rubin 1995) which was directed by the researcher while leaving room for quite spontaneous interaction. A research protocol was used for setting out the general research plan. A set of interview questions was devised for collecting data relevant to the research questions (see Appendix 5.1a & 5.1b). The main questions were supplemented by other types of on-the-spot questions normally used in qualitative interviews such as probing and follow-up questions, as described in Rubin & Rubin (1995). The purpose was to elicit pertinent and deeper responses from the participants. Rhetorical questions were also asked from time to time. These were not actual questions, but responses to the teachers' answers to show the researcher's "empathic active listening" (Kvale, 1996, p.135) so as to encourage the teachers to elaborate their ideas fully and spontaneously. The prepared list of main questions was not supposed to be used rigidly. There was a need to adapt these questions to suit different circumstances, such as particular teacher characteristics or perceptions, which may require modification of the questions for further probing or for getting around issues

which might be psychologically disturbing to teachers. As suggested by Rubin and Rubin (1995), “qualitative interviewing design is flexible, iterative, and continuous, rather than prepared in advance and locked in stone” (p.43). The process-oriented nature of qualitative interviewing means that the questioning is redesigned throughout the project.

To create a situation where teachers could participate in a “guided conversation” with the researcher in a relaxed and spontaneous manner, the interviews were conducted in Cantonese, the native language of both the teachers and the researcher. The purpose was to remove any possible inhibitions created by a language barrier or imbalanced power relations produced by the use of a second language. The recordings of the interviews were translated into English when they were transcribed. The recordings for the lessons, mostly delivered in English, were transcribed verbatim, assisted by field notes taken during observation.

A large part of the study deals with perceptions and attitudes, which are hard to gauge by handling data with a positivist approach. Therefore, an interpretive or constructionist approach is more often applied. Data collected for this study are to be considered not really as hard facts, but as views which are subject to interpretation within specific contexts. This constructionist approach is particularly evident in the interviews conducted after the lessons to collect views from the teacher participants. As suggested by Holstein and Gubrium (1995, as cited in Gubrium & Holstein, 2002), interview participants are more likely to be viewed as meaning makers, not passive conduits for retrieving information from an existing vessel of answers. Rubin and Rubin (1995) also describe interview participants as “partners rather than as objects of research” (p.10). Teachers’ views in this study were taken as genuine and sincere contributions which helped to piece together a collective picture of professional views.

To ensure that the teachers gave their genuine views without inhibition, I tried to minimise my role in directing the interviews. While ensuring that participants responded relevantly and sufficiently to the main questions of the research, I also avoided asking leading or directive questions which would point towards certain answers. The probing or follow-up questions were eliciting techniques rather than directive in nature. I usually probed where I considered the participants would be interested in talking further, rather than trying to elicit answers to suit certain expectations. Similarly, my empathic responses and rhetorical questions were often strategies to encourage the participants to elaborate their views further.

Analyses of data

Instead of using a highly structured coding system or checklist, the observations were conducted according to a more open framework. Analysis was open and qualitative in general, allowing teaching concepts and approaches to emerge from each lesson. The data of each teaching participant was first analysed individually. The first and second lessons were compared to see if there were similarities or differences. Ideas collected from the lesson observations were also calibrated with the teachers' views collected from the post-lesson interviews to see if they were consistent, and also to explore deeper perceptions or implications.

After individual analyses, the data of the teacher participants were collated for an overall analysis. Related themes were grouped together where related data from different teachers were analysed and discussed. Simple statistical methods were used for this part of the analysis. The purpose was to compile a collective picture of concepts and practice of all the teacher participants so that a direction for grammar pedagogy could be suggested for the task-based curriculum.

5.3.2 Design of grammar teaching materials for use in the second lesson

A set of grammar teaching material was provided for each teacher to use in the second lesson for observation. This would ensure that the teachers were really teaching with an intention to focus on grammar, as task-based teaching of grammar can be so flexible that it is sometimes hard to decide whether grammar is involved at all.

Instructions were given to teachers to make flexible use of the material so that their own teaching approach or teaching style would also emerge to interact with the approach underlying the material. They could decide which sections of the material to use in any order they like. They could also decide what aspects of grammar teaching to emphasise; they could decide how much time to spend on each section or even to skip some parts of the material which they considered incompatible with their own teaching approach.

The material was also used as a stimulant for eliciting more in-depth views about grammar teaching from the teachers in the interviews. The way they handled the more form-focused or meaning-focused material in the lesson could serve as a concrete basis for evoking their views on grammar teaching within the task-based approach, and give an indication of their relative positions on the continuum of form-focused instruction on the one hand, and meaning-focused instruction on the other.

In order to fit into the teaching schedule of each teacher, different sets of materials developed according to the same rationale were used based on the topics the teachers were teaching. A small number of them were used more than once for teachers who taught the same topic at the same level.

A. Principles for designing and using the grammar teaching materials

The materials were developed based on ideas in the curriculum documents about grammar teaching, and according to the current grammar teaching approach underlying the task-based textbooks schools were required to use.

Ideas in the curriculum documents (Curriculum Development Council, 1999, 2002) about what kind of grammar is taught in secondary schools and how grammar is taught has been expounded in section 4.3.2 of Chapter 4. These ideas were the major principles underlying the design of the materials. To recapitulate these ideas, the four major principles are: (a) Grammar is best learnt or taught in context; (b) Grammar in task-based learning is not a stand-alone body of language, but a means to an end. (b) A variety of grammar teaching methods can be used, ranging from exercises or activities consisting of discrete grammar items to those encouraging contextualised grammar practice; and (d) Grammar teaching can take place at different stages: before a task, during a task, and after a task.

The units of the new task-based textbooks used in Hong Kong are usually organised around themes. Each unit consists of pre-task language input activities like reading comprehension exercises, grammar exercises and guided oral practice (as described in the textbook analysis in section 4.4). These help students to acquire the grammatical structures and build up their language ability. They usually precede two or three tasks which require more authentic use of the language, which students need to accomplish at the end of each unit. The “Language Focus” sections consist of grammar analyses or practices for structures which need to be used for the tasks. They are sometimes quite brief and insufficient. The grammar material for the second lesson, which is an expanded version of the activities in the “Language Focus” sections, was designed to fill this gap. (Please refer to the sample unit from a textbook in Appendix 4.8. Appendix 5.2 is a set of

grammar teaching material designed to supplement one of the “Language Focus” sections of this unit.)

The grammar teaching material for use in the second lesson incorporates both traditional and task-based ideas for teaching grammar. The material is made up of three sections: A. Structure, B. Practice, and C. Production. (Please refer to the sample material in Appendix 5.2 for teaching “Wh-questions”). Section A starts with more explicit attention to grammar. It resembles traditional material used for grammar explanation. Section B provides students with an input which draws attention to the grammatical structure. It gives students guided practice through comprehending meaning. It is similar to the comprehension tasks described by Ellis (2003), which are “based on the assumption that acquisition occurs as a result of input-processing” and “involves attention to form as learners attempt to understand the message content” (p.156). Section C gives prompts for students to produce the structures in a less controlled situation. It is similar to the “structure-based production task” described in Ellis (2003, p.152), which involves production-driven activities focused on targeted grammatical forms. The grammar teaching material incorporates some features of two types of “focused task” suggested by Ellis (2003), structured production tasks and comprehension tasks. Ellis’s consciousness-raising tasks were not included since the emphasis on language forms and terminology as the focus of communication may not be favourable to young learners and this seldom features in locally-based textbooks and teaching materials.

The three sections of structure, practice and production serve to enhance students’ understanding of the grammatical structures to be taught and build up their ability to produce the grammatical structures. This organisation resembles the traditional grammar-based teaching approach, which is divided into presentation, practice and production stages, but in fact it is different in the basic concept of organising the material.

In traditional grammar teaching, the curriculum is organised around the grammatical structures to be covered, and the teaching of grammar is the end to be achieved. Here grammar teaching is only a means to an end under the task-based curriculum. It helps to provide students with the necessary language input for accomplishing the tasks. Explicit explanation of grammar and grammar exercises are permitted here, although the material is organised around the main theme of the chapter. As the teachers are given instructions to make flexible use of the material, they can also decide whether to use the material in the order given. They are not required to adhere to the rigid order of presentation followed by practice and production.

As suggested in Chapter 2 of this thesis, form and meaning have often competed for attention in grammar teaching within TBLT. Whether for input-focused or output-focused strategies, or form-focused or meaning-focused strategies, there is always the issue of whether teacher presentation of grammatical forms or student practice or production of structures should receive more attention. The traditional PPP method seems to retain a role since it encompasses all the aforementioned strategies. The materials designed for the second lesson aim to include all these elements, and at the same time leave a scope for teachers to decide what aspects to emphasise, and in what order to arrange the different focuses in their lesson.

Some features of traditional grammar teaching may still have a place in the task-based curriculum as long as they are used with discretion in modified forms that fit into different teaching situations, such as the explicit attention to/explanation of grammar rules. The grammar teaching material here is not a complete task in itself. Rather, it is intended to serve as grammar exercises/activities to support the accomplishment of the tasks at the end of each unit, which is a major teaching objective in completing the unit. More explicit attention to form can be permitted at this input stage, as has been suggested

in the curriculum documents.

Form-focused instruction is not naturally compatible with task-based teaching, which emphasises meaning rather than form. This tension between form and meaning has been discussed in section 2.4.1 of Chapter 2, which is about how grammar relates to TBLT. In fact, spontaneous language used in natural communication often does not prescribe the use of specific language forms. Therefore, Willis (1996) suggested that learners in task-based teaching should not be restricted to use particular language forms in doing the tasks. Instead, they should be free to choose whatever language forms they wish to convey what they mean, in order to fulfill the task goals as well as they can. Therefore, “it would defeat the purpose to dictate or control the language forms that they must use” (p.24). Even if an attempt is made to control the language forms to be used in a task, it would be difficult to make grammatical structures “task-essential”, as there may be other ways of completing the tasks without using the prescribed structures (Loschky and Bley-Vroman, 1993).

The design of the grammar materials for Lesson 2 was a compromise in accommodating the conflicting demands of grammar teaching and TBLT as expressed in the curriculum documents as well as in second language theory and research. It was an instrument for testing how the teacher participants may interact with the materials, and a stimulant for gauging their concepts of grammar teaching within a task-based context. It was not intended as an ideal type of materials for teachers to use.

B. Limitations

In adhering to the ethical principle of not imposing too much additional burden on teachers’ workloads in conducting the research (see section 5.4.1 on “Relationship between researcher and teacher participants” in this chapter), care was taken to ensure

that the lesson observations and interviews were conducted during times that suited the teacher participants' teaching schedules. To achieve this, I had to design different sets of materials with grammar topics that fitted into the units the teachers were teaching at the time. In producing these materials, there may have been small discrepancies in quality in terms of effectiveness, or small slips in accuracy. However, an effort was made to minimise these. Since all the materials were designed according to the same basic principles and they were not meant to be used under experimental conditions for rigid coverage by the teachers, it was hoped that minor imperfections in the materials could be appropriately handled at the stage of qualitative analysis of the data, which would take into consideration how these imperfections might have impacted the way teachers taught in their lessons. The teachers' interactions with the set of material in the lessons could also be calibrated with their reflections on using it in the post-lesson interviews.

5.4 Sampling and recruitment of teacher participants

This classroom empirical study aims to investigate the perceptions and practices of individual secondary school teachers. As schools were required to adopt the task-based approach and change to task-based textbooks beginning in 2002 at junior secondary level, this study aims to focus on the first three years of junior secondary levels from Secondary 1 to 3 (S1 to S3). Another reason for focusing on the junior secondary level is that teaching and learning are not yet very much affected by exam pressures.

The recruitment of teacher participants therefore focused on serving teachers who teach English at junior secondary level (from S1 to S3) in any secondary school in Hong Kong. Teachers who were interested in exploring grammar teaching were invited to take part in this study. Because of the voluntary nature of participation and the pressurised teaching environment, teachers who were willing to take on the extra burden in their workload in

order to participate in this study were probably those interested in enhancing their knowledge and exposure to ELT or the teaching of grammar, or who might feel that they had a responsibility to make a contribution to the research in their subject area. Participants of this study were invited mainly on the basis of personal connections within the teaching profession, as permission to take part in lesson observations relies very much on a trusting relationship. The teachers who were recruited were those willing to participate in this study, who often or sometimes practised grammar teaching in their day-to-day work. Variations in school banding and language level of the students were largely disregarded in the recruitment of teacher participants. However, factors like the teachers' levels of experience and the school bandings were also taken into consideration in the analysis of data and the discussion of results, if variations in the findings called for further discrimination of the backgrounds of the teachers and the schools. An attempt was also made to recruit teachers of differing levels of experience and from different school bandings to make the investigation more representative of normal schools. Very low banding schools with disciplinary problems were avoided so as to prevent interference of extraneous factors like disruptive classroom behaviour on the focus of investigation. To ensure that the teacher participants were amongst those in the mainstream of secondary English teachers who had a certain commitment to the profession, the following considerations were observed in recruiting teacher participants for the pilot study.

- Teachers who taught mainly English in S1 to S3 classes
- Subject knowledge: Participants had passed the LPAT benchmark examination, which was first introduced in 2002 to qualify teachers for teaching English, or they had received subject training in English which exempted them from the LPAT assessment
- Teacher training: Participants had received teacher training or were in the process of receiving teacher training

- Language teaching experience: Participants had a minimum of three years of language teaching experience. An attempt was also made to recruit teachers with different levels of experience to ensure that the study covers teachers with a wide range of experience and skills, as levels of experience tend to have a great impact on how teachers conceptualise and practise teaching.

The sampling method used in this study consists of features of convenience sampling, volunteer sampling and purposive sampling, as described in Cohen et al. (2007) and Wengraf (2001). The elements of volunteer and convenience sampling features in the recruitment of teacher participants were based on personal connections. On the other hand, the use of some criteria for selecting teachers also gave the study a purposive sampling element.

In order to collect sufficient data for useful analysis, I planned to have a minimum of 10 to 15 teacher participants for the study. Through direct contacts and assistance from my friends and associates in the teaching profession, I had the opportunity to communicate an invitation for research participants to over 100 teachers who fulfilled the selection criteria. Twelve teachers finally agreed to take part in my research.

Four teachers took part in the pilot study while eight others participated in the main study. With 2 lesson observations and 2 interviews for each of them, a total of 8 lesson observations and 8 interviews were conducted for the pilot study from October to December 2004; 16 lesson observations and 16 interviews were conducted for the main study from October 2005 to May 2006. Post-lesson interviews lasted for around 40 minutes to one hour. They were conducted mostly on the same day of the lesson observations, with just two exceptions when they could not fit into the teachers' timetables, and therefore had to be conducted two or three days later.

5.4.1 Relationship between the researcher and the teacher participants

As suggested by a number of researchers, the perspectives of both the researcher (etic perspective) and the participants (emic perspective) are important in qualitative research and they often interact to co-construct meaning (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The relationship between the researcher and the participants is pertinent in shaping the direction and results of the study. It is important to maintain an appropriate relationship which can facilitate the research and collection of valid data. Rubin and Rubin (1995) discuss the intricacies of such a relationship, especially in relation to the role of the researcher: “How objective does the researcher need to be to do good research? A bias against the group or person being interviewed may block access to or distort the results, but too much sympathy can also be blinding. On the other hand, neutrality is probably not a legitimate goal in qualitative research... The goal is to achieve some empathy, but not so much involvement that you cannot see the negative things, or if you see them, feel that you cannot report them” (p.13).

In this study, care was taken to maintain a balance between indifference and empathy. As the researcher, I attempted to maintain a neutral role as far as the situations allowed to minimise the chance of biased interpretations. I conversed in a friendly and relaxed manner, in much the same way like co-workers sharing ideas and experiences in the same profession, and I avoided taking a directive role in the conversations. I am an experienced English teacher myself, having teaching experience at both secondary and university levels. I was connected to the teacher participants through personal or professional contacts in the field of language teaching. I knew a small number of the teacher participants personally while others indirectly through introductions from professional friends or associates. My role was that of a peer who happened to have worked in slightly more variegated environments in the field. In conducting my research, I tried to maintain

a relationship that was friendly but not too close. It was hoped that this would facilitate the candid expression of views while avoiding the exertion of personal influence which would bias the results of the study.

In analysing the lessons and interviews, I also tried to avoid being too judgemental in imposing my own views and interpretations of what the teachers did or said. The teachers' concepts and practice were taken as genuine and sincere contributions to the study so that a comprehensive picture of teachers with different views and levels of experience could be formed by fitting the different pieces of the puzzle together concerning grammar teaching within the task-based curriculum.

5.4.2 Ethical issues

The ethical code for undertaking research was closely adhered to in this study, to ensure that no distress or harm would occur on the research participants and other parties involved (Cohen et al., 2007). Informed consent was properly obtained from the beginning. I first gained an initial understanding with the teacher participants about the study. Letters were then sent to their school principals to gain approval to conduct the research. (A sample letter is included in Appendix 5.3.) The purpose of the research and the commitment involved were stated clearly, as was the principle of anonymity. To avoid identifying individual students in the classes, the lessons were only audio-recorded rather than video-recorded. Individual students' names were also blotted out in the transcriptions of the lessons. The presence of the researcher was also explained by the teachers to the students in order to gain their consent for the study.

I also intended to establish good ethical relationships with the teacher participants, such as by adhering to the ethical code of not causing any distress or harm to them. According

to Rubin and Rubin (1995), this involves “treating interviewees seriously, going out of your way to prevent them from being hurt by the research or the write-up, being honest and keeping your promises” (p.100). This is especially relevant to the Hong Kong research context, which is facing many controversies connected to the education reform. In conducting lesson observations and interviews, I tried to be alert to the sensitive issues which might be troubling teachers in the recent educational context of Hong Kong. Recent educational policies might have instilled a sense of mistrust in classroom research instruments like lesson observations, as they have been frequently used as a means of assessment, such as for LPAT. In interacting with the teachers and phrasing the interview questions, I tried to ensure that I was not trying to challenge their professionalism or question their teaching effectiveness. An effort was made to develop a friendly and trusting relationship with the teachers and show empathy in interacting with them in the interviews, which also created a relaxing atmosphere that enabled teachers to speak their minds spontaneously.

A wide array of educational reform initiatives were being implemented in Hong Kong during the time the data were collected for the study. This was a great source of additional pressure on teachers' heavy workloads. To avoid adding pressure on the teachers, I carefully monitored the process of data collection. Observations and interviews schedules were arranged in advance and took into consideration the teachers' various commitments. To fit into their existing teaching schedules, the teaching materials for the second lesson observations were designed according to the topics the teachers had scheduled for their classes.

To ensure the successful completion of the research study so that the teacher participants can share the findings for their own professional development, I also had a responsibility to sustain my research efforts amidst obstacles, and to ensure that the data were collected,

analysed and reported in a robust and sincere manner.

5.5 Pilot study

To try out the research instruments for the empirical study and collect initial data for refining the research focus of this study, a pilot study was conducted before the main study. A total of eight lesson observations and eight interviews were conducted on four secondary teacher participants teaching English at junior secondary level (S1 to S2) at three schools. This initial collection and analysis of data has contributed to refining the research focus, research instruments and materials to be used in the lessons for the main study.

To help teachers reflect on and articulate what they did in the classes, the stimulated recall methodology was used as an additional research instrument for elicitation. Stimulated recall is an educational research methodology for exploring thought processes (or strategies) during an activity or task (Gass & Mackey, 2000). For this study, the lessons were audio-recorded and played to the teacher participants in the interviews as a stimulus to support the recall of what happened in the lessons. The teachers could stop the tape at any point of where they would like to comment on anything in the lessons, whether it was related to their thoughts, strategies or any other perceptions.

The lesson observations and interviews for the pilot study were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis. (A sample transcription of the lessons and interviews is included in Appendix 5.4a and 5.4b.) The lessons were analysed first in terms of each teacher's grammar teaching practice, task-based teaching practice and general teaching practice. The two lessons of each teacher were compared to see if they were consistent. The concepts underlying the practices in the lessons were then compared to the teacher's

grammar teaching concepts, task-based teaching concepts and general teaching concepts conveyed in the interviews. The two sets of data were triangulated against each other to see if there were any inconsistencies, which were then clarified to attain a coherent picture of the grammar teaching concepts and practice of each teacher. The ideas from the four teachers were then put together for comparison. Salient ideas which emerged from the data were identified for further exploration in the main study. (A summary of data analysis for each teacher is included in Appendix 5.5.)

There was a need to pool the data of the four teachers together after analysing them separately, so that a collective picture of variegated concepts and practice could be drawn. To present such a picture, using just qualitative analysis methods was not sufficient. Simple quantitative methods were also applied to compare the teaching practices of the teacher participants, and indicate whether their own teaching practice in the two lessons were consistent. One way of achieving this was to decide where each teacher was positioned on a continuum for measuring how grammar-oriented or task-oriented their teaching practice was. Then a complete picture of how all the four teacher participants perceived and practised grammar teaching within the task-based approach would be clearly presented.

5.5.1 Summary of data from the pilot study

Table 5.1 presents a summary of the lesson evaluations in a continuum showing the different degrees of practising a more grammar-based/form-focused approach on one end, or a more task-based/meaning-focused approach on the other.

Grammar-based/ Form-focused			Task-based/ Meaning-focused			
↓			↓			
<i>Area</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>Area</i>
A. Discrete approach		1a	1b 4a 4b	2b 2a 3a 3b		Contextualised approach
B. Grammar presentation (Deductive/Explanation)		1a	1b 2b 4a 4b	2a 3a 3b		Grammar presentation (Inductive/Use)
C. Heavy use of meta- language		1a 1b	2b 4a 4b	2a 3b	3a	Light use of meta- language
D. Controlled practice		1a 4a	1b 2b 2a 3a 3b 4b			Free practice
E. Teacher-fronted	1a	1b 4a 4b	2b	2a 3b 3a		Interactive

Table 5.1 Continuum for evaluating grammar lessons

As can be seen from Table 5.1, the four teachers were positioned in different parts of the continuum, indicating that some of them were more grammar-based while others were more task-based in their teaching practice. Teachers 1 and 4 were positioned towards the left side, which indicates that they were more grammar-based or form-focused. They often focused on teaching grammar as discrete structures, with more grammar explanation and use of grammatical metalanguage. On the other hand, Teachers 2 and 3 were positioned towards the right side, indicating that they were more task-oriented or meaning-focused. They demonstrated more contextualised teaching of grammar with more emphasis on using the language for communication; and there was also a lighter use of metalanguage.

Table 5.1 indicates that Teachers 1 and 4 were more teacher-fronted in teaching style while Teachers 2 and 3 were more interactive, as can be indicated by differences in the number of turns in the lessons (as presented in Appendix 5.5), ranging from the lowest of 47 turns (Teacher A, Lesson 1) to the highest of 221 turns (Teacher C, Lesson 2). On the degree of controlled/free practice, the differences between the four teachers were not as obvious. Most of them were positioned in the middle, while Teachers 1 and 4 used slightly more controlled strategies in guiding students' grammar practice, especially in Lesson 1.

Although all four teachers seemed to be supportive of the task-based teaching approach, they had different ideas about how strictly they should observe the principles of task-based teaching. They differed in the degree they endorsed task-based teaching in a strong or weak form, as distinguished by Skehan (1996) in terms of the adherence to the idea of the task as the basic unit of teaching which drives the acquisition process, and the extent that focused grammar instruction is used. The teachers also had different views about how they should teach grammar within the task-based approach. The long ingrained tension between form and meaning, or form and function, seems to be evident, as can be shown in the teachers' comments in the interviews.

Teachers who seemed to favour less explicit teaching of grammar (for example, Teacher 2 and Teacher 3) also tended to prefer stronger adherence to the principles of task-based teaching. Teacher 2, in particular, seemed to be a staunch supporter of the strong form of the task-based approach. To her, it was very important that everything focused on the same theme. Anything which deviated from this was not task-based. One of her negative comments against the provided material for the second lesson was the fact the some parts of it did not seemed to be directly related to the main theme of 'Unit 5 Going places',

which was about sightseeing in Hong Kong. She expressed her view strongly that she did not consider the material as task-based (Teacher 2 Interview 2: Turn 74). In particular, she did not like the activity in Section C, where students were asked to make 5 sentences about the things they did in the week before. Although this was related to students' everyday life, she thought that it deviated from the main theme of sightseeing and students might also find it difficult to produce complete sentences on their own.

Teacher 1 and Teacher 4 had very different views. Their positions on left side of the continuum indicates that they were more grammar-oriented or form-focused. Teacher 1, for example, indicated in the interviews that she supported the use of metalanguage and explicit explanation of grammatical structures and rules, as she believed these will help students to understand grammatical concepts and read about grammar (Teacher 1 Interview 1: Turn 88; Teacher 1 Interview 2: Turn 78, 102 to 104).

Although most of the other teachers demonstrated a consistency in their teaching concepts and practice in their lessons and interviews, there were some discrepancies in the ways that Teacher 1 perceived and practised TBLT. Although her teaching approach tended towards the left side on the continuum, she was in fact quite supportive of TBLT. In Teacher 1 Interview 2, she explained that sometimes she did not practise task-based teaching of grammar because of the lack of appropriate teaching materials. She also suggested that students may need to use little language in completing a task (that is, some structures may not be task-essential); and that some tasks may look childish to older students, as they do not really reflect real-life situations. These comments are probably connected to the issue of task design and appropriate task-based teaching materials, which is a potential problem area which may require more attention.

In contrast to Teacher 2, Teacher 1 had positive views about the set of materials she was

provided for use in Lesson 2. She commented on this in the second interview:

They are ... they are of course good because they are task-based. Our materials are often for purely drilling. Because we don't have time to produce them, we normally use the questions and answers in the resource files provided by the publishers. The questions are normally purely for drilling. However, sometimes the books may include some materials with dialogues, then we may use them. Sometimes if we have time to think about things, we also try to use this type of approach. But if we are too busy, we will use those mechanical worksheets.

(Teacher 1, Interview 2: Turn 10)

To her, the provided materials were task-based and good to use. Her views were very different from Teacher 2 who was quite negative about a similar set of materials, as has been discussed earlier in this section. Their different views highlight the possibility of different perceptions concerning the nature of task-based teaching by different teachers.

The ways that teachers interacted with the provided materials in the second lesson also shed light on their grammar teaching and task-based teaching concepts. There were different degrees of discrepancies in the ways that teachers conducted the two lessons. This indicates that there may be different levels of interactions between the teachers' normal practice, and the approach underlying the provided materials. The teaching approach of Teacher 3 was most consistent for both lessons. No matter what materials she was using, she consistently practised her task-based teaching, putting emphasis on the uses rather than the forms of the grammatical structures.

The two lessons of the other three teachers show some differences between each other. Teacher 4 spent more time on explaining the vocabulary of the reading passage in Lesson 2, as she found that the text contained quite a number of unfamiliar expressions compared to the passages she usually used. Teacher 1's Lesson 2 seemed more task-based and interactive than Lesson 1. As she explained in Interview 2, this was mainly the result of

using more task-based material in the second lesson, which she believed had facilitated her teaching. What she did in Lesson 2 shows that she was in fact quite adept at using the task-based approach. In Interview 2 she suggested that she could not always use the proper task-based approach because of the lack of appropriate teaching materials. She was in fact quite supportive of the task-based approach.

Although the same type of teaching material was used in the second lesson of Teacher 2, she reacted to it in a totally different way. Compared to Lesson 1, there were more teacher-fronted grammar explanations in Lesson 2. From her Interview 2, it is evident that Teacher 2 expressed a distaste for the teaching approach underlying the provided teaching materials. She believed that it is not useful to explain grammar rules to students, and that the materials put undue pressure on her to teach in a way she felt uncomfortable about. It is quite surprising that the four teachers reacted to the provided teaching materials quite differently. The materials also interacted with their teaching approaches in different ways, with different effects on their grammar-oriented versus task-oriented tendencies.

When asked about what factors may influence their grammar teaching approach, the teachers provided a variety of answers which ranged from teaching materials and studies (Teacher 4), teaching conditions (Teacher 2), experience (Teacher 3) and colleagues (Teacher 1). They also perceived a number of constraints from the wider educational contexts which could have an impact on the way they teach. Common themes which emerged were heavy workloads (Teacher 1, Interview 2: Turn 71 to 76), low English level of students (Teacher 4 Interview 2: Turn 152 to 154), high demands on teachers' time and ability by the Education Bureau (Teacher 2 Interview 2: Turn 78), curriculum organisation of their own school (Teacher 1 Interview 1: Turn 99 to 102; Teacher 1 Interview 2: Turn 54 to 56), and lack of good grammar teaching materials (Teacher 1

Interview 1: Turn 52, 66, 80).

All of them seemed to be quite disconnected from the government educational policy unit, the EMB, as a source of professional support. They did not seem to be interested in reading the curriculum documents either.

Their views towards the constraints they had to face and their autonomy in practising teaching seemed to be a little paradoxical. On the one hand, they seemed to feel very much restricted by the various constraints they had to cope with; on the other hand, most of them affirmed that they usually had the autonomy to practise what they believed in teaching. The intricate relationships between their teaching concepts and practices and the other factors related to the wider educational developments need to be explored further to form a complete picture of the way teachers perceive and implement grammar teaching.

5.5.2 Major themes from the pilot study

From the initial data analysis, a number of themes emerged under the three categories of grammar teaching concepts/practice, task-based teaching concepts/practice and general teaching concepts/practice.

Grammar teaching concepts/practice

- The place of grammar teaching in the curriculum
- Grammar explanation (explicit teaching of grammatical rules)
- Use of metalanguage
- Task-based teaching of grammar
- Grammar teaching materials in textbooks

Task-based teaching concepts/practice

- Adherence to the same theme
- Meaningful communication
- Practicability of task-based teaching
- Usefulness of task-based teaching

General teaching concepts/practice

- Teaching effectiveness
- Engagement

In the interviews, the teachers also suggested various factors which may have an impact on grammar teaching in TBLT. They were:

- Limitations e.g. heavy workload, tight schedule
- EMB policies
- School policy
- Collaboration/teamwork
- Using IT for enhancing student interest
- Student ability

Initial data analysis shows that the teacher participants put different emphases on the above themes. For example, Teacher 1 clearly considered explicit teaching of grammatical rules as more useful than any other teacher. Teachers 2 and 3 appeared to endorse TBLT more strongly than the other two teachers. Teaching effectiveness and the Education Bureau's views about it seemed to register more on the mind of Teacher 2, while Teacher 4 was more concerned about the impact of low student ability on the effective implementation of the task-based approach.

There may also be possible relationships between the teachers' grammar teaching concepts, task-based teaching concepts and general teaching concepts. The teachers also suggested that other contextual and extraneous factors may also have an impact on the way they teach grammar. These, together with the other intricate relationships of educational developments, theory or research, had to be explored further in the main study in order to provide a comprehensive picture about the concepts and practice of grammar teaching in Hong Kong.

5.6 Modification of research instruments based on initial data from pilot study

5.6.1 Analysis of data

Analysis of data was mostly qualitative in the pilot study. It was evident that various themes emerged from the study which could possibly explain the teachers' concepts and practice of grammar teaching in some way. However, the relative importance of various themes to the teachers was still quite unestablished, as were the relationships between various factors contributing to concepts and practice as presented in the conceptual framework in Figure 5.1 in this chapter. A more complete picture of the data could be drawn after detailed analyses of the data from the teacher participants in the main study.

The bi-polar continuum presented in Table 5.1 serves the main purpose of obtaining an initial picture of teachers' concepts and practice on grammar teaching. This crude measure indicating teachers' positions on the continuum is not sufficient for uncovering the complexities and nuances underlying the teachers' perceptions and practice. A more complex framework needs to be developed for in-depth analysis of what really occurred in the lessons for the main study, which could be further reinforced by teachers' views

from the interviews. Data from the lessons and interviews could be coded according to the major themes which emerged from the pilot study. Simple statistical methods to give relative weightings to the themes emerging from this study could be used to facilitate comparisons between major themes in relation to different teachers.

The discussion of the data in the pilot study has been limited to data from the lesson observations and interviews. More in-depth and comprehensive analyses and interpretation of the data can be attained by connecting the data from the empirical study with those from the literature review and materials analyses on issues related to the wider English language teaching and educational contexts.

5.6.2 Stimulated recall

It was decided that the use of the stimulated recall methodology for Lesson 1 would be given up in the main study, for a number of reasons.

Most of the teachers in the pilot study did not seem to favour the use of the stimulated recall methodology. Some of them showed obvious annoyance and suggested that they were too tired to listen and think of things to talk about and they preferred that I asked them questions. The use of this additional instrument seemed to have put too much burden on the teachers as it is more intellectually demanding, and may not suit the tired teachers who have a heavy teaching schedule. It also made the interview appear less like a natural conversation, and made the teachers feel tense and anxious. The teachers had to initiate responses on issues they considered important, but they often focused on teaching effectiveness rather than the other important issues that this study also aims to address.

Stimulated recall is good for uncovering unconscious or subconscious psychological processes. It is appropriate for exploring mental processes in language learning. However, it may not be necessary for eliciting teachers' views and attitudes towards teaching methodology. In fact, most of the teachers commented on points regarding their teaching effectiveness (Teacher1, Teacher 3 and Teacher 4), or some other aspects concerning reasons behind their decisions in the classroom. These could easily have been recalled without the use of the methodology if the interview was conducted within a short time after the lesson. It is perhaps more useful to use the method if a number of lessons observations are conducted on each teacher and the subsequent interviews take place quite a long time afterwards. Since teachers were only required to teach two lessons for this study and the interviews were conducted immediately or shortly after these, this research instrument may not be so essential, as teachers can easily recall what they have done without using it. This is probably the reason why they expressed annoyance about it. In fact, the same function of eliciting their spontaneous response on something they consider important can also be achieved if the researcher asks the following question at the beginning of the interview, "What special things about the lesson would you like to comment on before I ask you more specific questions?"

As it is most important to use a tool that teachers feel comfortable with, I decided to give this method up in the main study.

5.6.3 Research questions and interview questions

As the stimulated recall methodology was to be given up, some of the interview questions needed to be re-considered. In the pilot study, the first part of each interview was mostly directed by the teacher participants. The recording of each lesson was played to them, and they had to decide when to stop and make comments. The researcher then filled the gaps

of areas insufficiently addressed by asking questions in the second part of the interview. If teachers do not need to use stimulated recall, questions need to be added to give a more comprehensive coverage of the various issues that the research questions aim to address.

Some of the interview questions in Interview 1 and Interview 2 were found to be repetitive. Therefore, a clearer focus for each of the two interviews had to be assigned. While the first one aimed to explore the teachers' more expressed beliefs and attitudes, the second probed into the more latent aspects which would become more evident when I observed the teacher's lesson for the second time. More questions were used to explore the similarities and differences between the two lessons and the teacher's attitude towards them. The other extraneous factors which may influence the teachers' attitudes and practice, such as those related to the other educational developments in Hong Kong, could also be explored in more depth.

To ensure that there was a comprehensive coverage of all the important issues that the research questions aimed to address, the subsidiary questions under the three focuses of teachers' perceptions, teachers' practices and extraneous factors were re-organised and refined.

In response to new developments in educational policy, an additional main interview question was added to the first interview from May 2006, with an aim to find out if the newly introduced School-based Assessment (SBA)¹⁰ may have an influence on the way teachers teach grammar. This question was irrelevant before the second term of the academic year of 2005-6, when schools were not yet making an effort to accommodate the new policy. However, the new policy may have an impact on grammar teaching when

¹⁰ The school-based assessment was introduced to change the high-pressure one-off summative public examination students needed to take at the end of their secondary studies from 2009. Part of the reformed assessment system consists of formative assessments of oral presentations related to students' extensive reading which takes place in the last two years of their study.

it becomes an integral part of the assessment system.

Please refer to Appendix 5.1a for the interview questions for the pilot study. The revised interview questions for the main study are included in Appendix 5.1b.

5.6.4 Grammar teaching materials for use in Lesson 2

The four teachers seemed to have quite disparate views about the set of material provided for them to use in Lesson 2. While Teachers 1 and 4 seemed to be quite positive about it and thought it was quite task-based and well-designed, Teachers 2 and 3 felt quite negative about it. They suggested that the material was not sufficiently task-based and some of the activities were not focused on the same theme. They also thought that some of the more minor grammatical rules should not receive so much attention, for example, the position of the prepositional phrases of time (Teacher 2, Interview 2). Teacher 4 also suggested she started with Section B instead of Section A of the material because she thought reading the dialogue in section B could help to give students some kind of context for using the grammatical structures (Teacher 4, Interviews 2).

The set of material was designed according to ideas on grammar teaching in the curriculum documents as well as from second language teaching theory and research. It was intended to fit into task-based teaching rather than forming complete tasks in themselves. It incorporated task-based features as well as the more grammar-based elements of the PPP approach. It is natural that it could not fulfil the expectation of all the teachers, as the four of them had quite different concepts and practices regarding task-based and grammar-based teaching. However, care should be taken that the provided materials should be positioned somewhere in the middle of the continuum of task-based and grammar-based teaching, so as to be an effective tool for eliciting responses from

teachers of different levels of task-based and grammar-based orientation.

To make the materials function better as one of the research instruments in the main study, I had to be aware of focusing on more basic and important grammatical rules rather than the minor rules which may be distracting. The first section on presentation of grammatical structures could also be slightly more contextualised with short reading passages or dialogues. Care should also be taken to maintain a similar quality for different sets of materials to fit into different lessons, ensuring a suitable balance between task-based and grammar-based elements, and the consistent levels of difficulty.

5.7 Summary of research instruments to be used in the main study

After initially developing the research instruments for data collection and analysis, they were tried out in the pilot study and refined for use in the main study. The following are the major types of research instruments to be used for data collection in the main study:

- Two lesson observations and two post-lesson interviews for collecting ideas about grammar teaching concepts and practice on a total of eight teachers
- A set of grammar teaching materials for each teacher to use in the second lesson observations
- A questionnaire on views towards grammar teaching for each teacher to complete at the end of the second interview.

The experience of conducting the pilot study made me realise the advantage of having a brief summary of the teachers' views so that it would be easier to conceptualise their overall concepts, views and practice. Therefore, a short questionnaire was added as a supplementary research instrument for the main study, to elicit the overall views of the

teachers regarding grammar teaching and task-based teaching. The questionnaire was given to each teacher participant at the end of the second interview. After the teacher completed the questionnaire, I asked the teacher to clarify her answers which did not seem to be consistent with my overall impression of her data.

The questionnaire served the purpose of an additional means of triangulation in order to ensure that my understanding of each teacher's concepts and views on grammar teaching and task-based teaching was accurate and complete. It consists of 15 statements about the views of teachers towards grammar teaching and task-based teaching. The teachers need to indicate using a Likert Scale of 1 to 5 the extent they agree or disagree with the statements. (The questionnaire is attached in Appendix 5.7.)¹¹

A generally qualitative methodological approach was to be adopted for the collection and analysis of data for this study. However, in order to give relative weightings to the themes emerging from this study so as to make comparisons between teachers, simple statistical methods were also applied in analysing the data.

The use of multiple research methods and research instruments in this study facilitates the collection and analyses of rich data at different levels related to the research focus. It is also an effective means of triangulation for comparing data from different sources so as to

¹¹ As the decision to use the questionnaire was made after the pilot study, it was not possible to pilot it in a similar situation of how it would be used in the main study unless another pilot study involving the various lesson observations and interviews was conducted. However, it should be noted that this questionnaire is not the type of the more commonly used questionnaires which are often distributed to a large number of respondents and completed without personal contact between the researcher and the respondents. In this study, it is used as a supplementary tool to triangulate the data collected from the interviews. After the teachers had completed the questionnaire, I immediately discussed inconsistencies against my understanding of the teachers' overall concepts and views. Any flaws in questionnaire design or ambiguities in the wording of the questions could have been rectified by a face-to-face discussion. For example, I asked Teacher C to clarify why his ratings for Questions 2 and 3 were different and gave him an opportunity to describe in more depth his understanding of explaining grammatical rules and drawing attention to grammatical forms.

ensure a relatively truthful picture can be formed concerning grammar teaching concepts and practice within the task-based curriculum.

5.8 Validity and reliability

Validity and reliability in data collection and analysis are important for qualitative research, which is often subject to the pitfalls of biased interpretations. As suggested by Winter (2000, as cited in Cohen et al., 2007, p.133), “in qualitative data validity might be addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached, the extent of triangulation, and the disinterestedness or objectivity of the researcher.” These principles have been generally observed in this study.

The multi-method approach adopted in this study serves the purposes of widening the scope of the study and enhancing the depth and richness of the data. This study focuses on a specific area of language teaching, that is, grammar teaching within the task-based approach. To contextualise the investigation, sources from different levels of the educational contexts were used, from the literature in the wider contexts of educational research and theory, to the curriculum documents disseminated by the Education Bureau; then the more practical textbook and supplementary materials were also investigated before concepts and practices of the frontline teachers were explored. The study is therefore well-grounded in the scope and depth of data collection.

Different research instruments were also used for the empirical component of the study in investigating teachers’ concepts and practice, such as the lesson observations and the post-lesson interviews. An intervention in the form of a set of teaching materials was also used in the second lesson to provoke the expression of perspectives different from the

naturalistic first lesson. To ensure that the views of the teachers were communicated coherently and consistently in the lessons and interviews, teachers were also asked to fill in and discuss a short questionnaire which summarised their views at the end of second interview. These different methods serve the purpose of triangulation as the different sets of data can be compared to see if there are discrepancies, or whether explanations for some inexplicable data in one set of data can be gained from the other data sets.

A pilot study was conducted to try out the research instruments, which were subsequently refined to ensure higher validity and reliability for the main study. Details about this has been discussed in section 5.6 of this chapter.

An effort was also made to ensure that the data were collected under objective and stable conditions for both the lesson observations and the interviews. Careful preparation work before the lessons and interviews were completed, such as the development of a research protocol and the main interview questions, and conducting pre-observation and pre-interview briefings on observation and interview schedules. Different sets of teaching materials produced for use in the second lesson were also compared and revised to ensure that they were similar in quality and design before they were used in the lessons. To ensure that the data collected were reliable, the transcriptions of the lessons and interviews and the draft of the data analysis were sent to the teachers for their comments and relevant revisions were incorporated.

Different types of activities had to be coded in the lesson observations transcription. The coding themes were based on major themes which emerged from the pilot study. As the lessons were only audio-recorded, it was important that there was no misinterpretation of what was going on in the lessons. The coding of observation data was checked several times to ensure consistency. When overlappings were identified, re-codings of data were

made, as in the case of “explanation of grammar rules and uses” and “explanation of grammatical forms” which were at first hard to differentiate. In addition, field notes were used to supplement the recordings. They were taken consistently to record the types of activities going on in different parts of the lessons. For example, a considerable part of the first lesson of Teacher F was marked by the teacher’s slow speech. This caused some initial problems in transcription. Checking of the field notes indicated that this was caused by the teacher writing on the board while reading out what she was writing to the class. The coding of the observation data was re-checked against the field notes to ensure accuracy and additional information about the teaching contexts were properly incorporated in the transcriptions.

The interview transcriptions were also checked for researcher bias. One possible pitfall was the that I might have asked leading questions to elicit answers that I expected. As shown in Table 6.11, the time teachers spent on talking about the teaching materials was more than any other topics. The transcriptions were checked to ensure that it was not because I tried to direct teachers’ attention to the topic. I asked questions mainly according to the list of questions I had to cover. I just encouraged teachers to talk more about what they were interested in based on the enthusiasm they showed in the interviews. Most of the seemingly directive questions were like rhetorical questions mainly for showing empathy and encouraging them to talk more on what they had initiated.

In qualitative research there is always an element of subjectivity and indeterminacy as the perspectives of both the researcher and the participants are significant in making meaning (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002). Although both the etic and emic perspectives play an important role in this study, both are subsumed under the discipline of second language teaching which serves as a unifying force to rule out any strong tendency for biased interpretations. In fact, both sides can be considered as being disinterested in providing

their own honest views concerning the research topic. There seems to be no particular personal gain or loss, other than to make some useful contributions to their own professional discipline.

5.9 Chapter summary

This chapter outlines the research focus and the overall research design of the study. It also describes the research methodology in collecting and analysing data, as well as sampling methods and the recruitment of research participants. Principles underlying major research instruments, such as the grammar teaching materials to be used in the second lesson have been explored in detail. Furthermore, this chapter also describes a pilot study which was conducted to collect and analyse initial data and try out the research instruments. Modifications of the research instruments are also discussed, drawing a clear conclusion on the kind of research methodology and instruments to be used in the main study. Based on ideas gained from the pilot study regarding areas for improvement, changes were made to the interview questions and new grammar teaching materials were written for the main study.

In addition, a framework for analysing views and concepts at different levels has been proposed in this chapter. The framework will be applied for analysing and discussing the perceptions and practice of individual teachers in relation to the wider contextual factors. Findings from the data analysis of the main study will be presented and discussed in the next two chapters.

Chapter 6 Findings on individual teachers' grammar teaching concepts and practice

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 analysed the intended curriculum for the teaching of grammar by analysing ideas presented in the curriculum documents. It also examined how these ideas are conveyed and interpreted in teacher training and teaching materials. Findings revealed paradoxes and tensions that are likely to cause problems at the level of class implementation. To see how these curriculum ideas are enacted in the classroom, it is important to understand the teachers' role in the process, as they are important agents in curriculum implementation.

This chapter examines the individual teachers' teaching concepts and practice underlying the implementation of curriculum ideas on grammar teaching through an empirical study, based on the piloted research methodology described in Chapter 5. Analyses of the data will show the different factors involved in the enactment of curriculum ideas in the classroom.

6.2 Framework for data analysis in the empirical study

As described in Chapter 1, lesson observations and interviews were conducted for the empirical study to answer the following subsidiary research question:

Question 4: How do individual teachers in Hong Kong perceive and practise grammar teaching?

A total of two lesson observations and two post-lesson interviews were conducted on each of the eight teacher participants, resulting in a database consisting of 16 lesson

observations and 16 interviews. The data were transcribed (samples of the lesson observation and interview transcriptions are included as Appendices 6.1a and 6.1b) and coded according to a framework which was developed for organising data, based on the major themes which emerged from the pilot study, and further emerging themes from the new data of the main study. Themes for organising the data for the lesson observations and interviews are presented in Table 6.1 and Table 6.2 respectively.

<i>A. Teacher instruction</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explanation of grammatical terms • Explanation of grammar rules and uses • Explanation of grammatical forms • Explanation of vocabulary • Administrative or task / activity instructions (including instructions for student practice and teacher talk to establish rapport)
<i>B. Student practice or responses (including teacher elicitation)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free / spontaneous and meaningful practice / response • Controlled practice / response focusing on meaning and uses of structures • Controlled practice / response focusing on forms • Rhetorical / mechanical / empathic response to teacher's questions • Reading by individual students • Whole class choral reading
<i>C. Non-whole class activities</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group oral practice (e.g. discussion) • Individual written practice (e.g. exercise)

Table 6.1 Themes for organising lesson data

<i>A. Teacher's grammar teaching concepts</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grammar and the curriculum (the place and importance of grammar teaching) • How to teach grammar <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Organisation of teaching ➤ Grammar explanation ➤ Metalanguage ➤ Grammar and meaning ➤ Practice • Grammar teaching and TBLT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Concept of TBLT / grammar in TBLT ➤ Effectiveness of tasks ➤ Contextualisation ➤ Integration of input and output • General teaching effectiveness
<i>B. Teacher's views on / knowledge of the grammar teaching environment</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second language teaching theories and research • Educational and/or language teaching policies • Curriculum ideas • Teaching materials • Other factors and limitations

Table 6.2 Themes for organising interview data

Analysis of data for both the lessons and the interviews was basically qualitative, as teachers' concepts, views and practice from the transcriptions were extracted for in-depth analysis and comparison under related themes. In order to compare and contrast various aspects of teacher practice in the lessons conducted by different teachers, and those in the two lessons conducted by the same teacher, simple statistical methods were also employed. Based on the character counts in coding the lessons by themes using the data analysis software NVivo, weightings were given to the various activities coded by themes as shown in Table 6.1 and Table 6.2. These will be applied in the analysis of data in

section 6.4 of this chapter.

This chapter will present the data of all the teacher participants in a framework of teaching concepts and practice. Lessons were the basis for analysing teaching practice. By coding and generating weightings for the various classroom teaching and learning activities, the teaching practice of different teachers could be compared, as could the teaching practice of individual teachers in the two different lessons. The concepts and views that emerged from the interview data further deepened and triangulated the analysis of the lesson data. Data from different lessons and interviews were then pieced together in order to construct an overall picture of the different ways of perceiving and practising the teaching of grammar.

6.3 Teacher and class information

As described in section 5.4 in Chapter 5, there were several recruitment criteria for the teacher participants in this study. They had to be practising English teachers teaching English to S1 to S3 students. They needed to be subject trained having received teacher training, or passed the benchmark examination, “Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers (English Language)” (LPAT), which was first introduced in 2002 to qualify teachers for teaching English. A minimum of three years of teaching experience was also required. Teachers participated in the study voluntarily based on personal connections.

Details of the eight teacher participants are summarised in Table 6.3. As can be seen from the table, the teachers’ experience ranged from 3 to 24 years. Both CMI and EMI schools¹² from Bands 1 to 3¹³ were included, with classes from all the three levels of

¹² CMI stands for Chinese medium of instruction, while EMI stands for English medium of instruction. Students in schools using English as medium of instruction usually have higher English levels than those from schools using Chinese as a medium of instruction. In English classes, teachers are expected to use English as the medium of instruction no matter in EMI or CMI schools.

junior secondary from S1 to S3.

<i>Teacher</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>G</i>	<i>H</i>
<i>Experience (yrs.)</i>	11	14	24	10+	15+	3	8	5
<i>Class level</i>	S2	S1	S1	S2	S3	S3	S2	S1
<i>Class size</i>	42	39	27	44	45	26	40	44
<i>Banding</i>	2	2	2	1	1	1	2	3
<i>EMI/CMI</i>	CMI	CMI	CMI	EMI	EMI	CMI	CMI	CMI

Table 6.3 Teacher and class information

Grammar topics in the classes were decided by the teachers, according to their preference or suitability for their teaching schedule at the time of the class visits. Table 6.4 indicates their topics. Based on their choice, I designed a set of grammar teaching materials for them to use in the second lesson. They could then compare their experience of using these materials to the normal materials they used in the first lesson, and talk about it in the post-lesson interviews. As most of them were teaching different topics when the lesson observations took place in this study, I developed a total of seven different sets of materials for them to use. The materials were drafted and then revised several times according to the experience I gained in trying out similar materials in the pilot study, as reported in section 5.6.4 of Chapter 5. A sample of these is included in Appendix 6.2.

¹³ Secondary schools students are divided into three bands according to their academic scores in the three major subjects of English, Chinese and Mathematics in the assessments in their primary schools. Band 1 is the highest level while Band 3 is the lowest. Schools are usually referred to as belonging to a certain band if the majority of their Secondary 1 students attain scores for that banding.

<i>Teacher</i>	<i>Lesson 1</i>	<i>Lesson 2</i>
A	Conditional sentences	Prepositional phrases of time
B	Possessive adjectives: my, your, our, their, his, her, its	Simple Past Tense
C	Present Continuous Tense	Simple Past Tense
D	Giving instructions	Connectives of reason and result
E	Agreement	Commenting on amounts
F	Modal verbs	Parts of speech
G	Conditional sentences	Present Perfect Tense
H	Future tense (will, is going to)	Must / Must not

Table 6.4 Grammar topics for the lessons

6.4 Teachers' grammar teaching practice

This section examines the teachers' grammar teaching practice in lessons. Activities in the lessons were first analysed in detail. The ideas and concepts conveyed in the lessons were then triangulated according to the concepts and views conveyed in the interviews.

6.4.1 Grammar and the curriculum

Although the schools of all the teaching participants had changed to the task-based textbook at the time the study was conducted, they differed in the degree they followed the textbook in planning their teaching curriculum. As shown in the interview data, most of the schools, such as the school of Teacher H, tested students according to separate skills, such as reading, writing, listening, speaking, plus G. E. (General English). The G. E. paper was particularly intended for testing grammar (Turn 16, H11). In some cases, the lessons were designated for separate skills. This idea of teaching language as separate skills was reflected in Teacher D's interview (Turn 114, D12).

Although most of the teachers suggested that they mainly followed the task-based textbook in teaching (Turn 220, B11; Turn 15-18, C11), quite a few of them also commented that they also had to follow a commonly agreed teaching schedule, or what they referred to as a “scheme of work” (Turn 97-100, C11; Turn 128-130, G11). Their scheme of work was often the result of collaborative effort and discussion, as they decided what to cover from the textbook, and how to modify material in it to suit their students (Turn 123-130, E12). Just like Teacher E who commented: “we design the curriculum together”, other teachers also referred to similar ways of making adjustments to the textbook in planning their teaching curriculum. Teacher B suggested that they covered units differently, including more content for some, while omitting some material for the others: “For the long schedule we cover these [the tasks] as well. For the short schedule ... we have the short schedule for Unit 2. I teach the passage and do a little of the comprehension ... the attached comprehension exercise. Then we cover the grammar. We skip the tasks” (Turn 78, B11).

Some of the teachers stressed the importance of grammar for examinations. Teacher A, for example, suggested that students pay attention to grammar because it helped them in school examinations, “... around 60% of the exams is on grammar. They think that if I work harder and practise more, I will gain a good mark. So they care more about it” (Turn 181, A11). Teacher B also maintained that grammar is an important component in the quizzes they administered after completing each unit for their school-based assessment (Turn 20 & 54, B11).

6.4.2 Grammar teaching in the lessons

As has been described earlier in this chapter (see section 6.2), simple statistical methods

were employed to compare and contrast various aspects of teacher practice in the lessons conducted by different teachers, and those in the two lessons conducted by the same teacher. A computer programme for statistical analysis, NVivo, was used for coding the activities in the lessons, and “weightings”¹⁴ were generated based on the character counts of the length of the lesson transcriptions. A summary of weightings is presented in Table 6.5. This presents the two main categories of activities, “teacher instruction” and “student practice or responses”. Following this are two separate tables, each focusing on the different types of activities under one of the two main categories. These are given numerical values to indicate their relative importance in the lessons, in terms of the weightings generated by character counts. Table 6.6 presents types of activities related to teacher instruction in order of importance, and Table 6.7 presents types of activities related to student practice or responses in order of importance. To give a full picture of student practice, the amounts of time spent on non-whole class activities like group oral practice and individual written practice are also recorded in Table 6.8. Table 6.9 presents the number of total turns and the number of long turns of over 15 and 30 lines in each lesson. Table 6.10 shows the occurrences of grammatical terms, which indicate the different levels of emphasis teachers put on the use of metalanguage in their lessons.

¹⁴ According to NVivo statistics, one character means one letter or space, or pressing a key once on the keyboard in transcribing the lessons and interviews. More character counts mean longer transcriptions. In this thesis, the word “weightings” is used for comparing the character counts for class activities or teacher instruction to indicate the degree of emphasis by having longer or shorter transcriptions. This is not normally how this word is used, but since a technical term is needed and no obvious candidate exists, “weightings” is used for referring to the data in this aspect.

Table 6.5 Weightings of lesson activities for all the teachers

<i>Teacher instruction</i>	AL1	AL2	BL1	BL2	CL1	CL2	DL1	DL2	EL1	EL2	FL1	FL2	GL1	GL2	HL1	HL2	Total
• Explanation of grammatical terms *	487	1318	187	1627	466	1328	574	384								460	6831
• Explanation of grammar rules and usage	2365	3497	3794	2661	5078	3742	7013	4099		2934			5279	3481	13931	3697	61571
• Explanation of grammatical forms	1314	163	608	3683	2976	2934	1643	1277	1211	210	9938	11287	1666	6513			45443
• Explanation of vocabulary			3049	809	957	485	819		113	757			1687	7120	3865	3313	22974
• Administrative instructions (including instructions for student practice and teacher talk to establish rapport)	2455	3347	4851	5630	5337	4254	6478	8117	2460	7866	867	782	3306	6317	2495	3092	67654
<i>Total weightings for teacher instruction</i>	<i>6134</i>	<i>7007</i>	<i>12302</i>	<i>12783</i>	<i>14348</i>	<i>11435</i>	<i>15953</i>	<i>13493</i>	<i>3784</i>	<i>11767</i>	<i>10805</i>	<i>12069</i>	<i>11938</i>	<i>22431</i>	<i>20291</i>	<i>10102</i>	<i>204473</i>
<i>Student practice or responses</i>	AL1	AL2	BL1	BL2	CL1	CL2	DL1	DL2	EL1	EL2	FL1	FL2	GL1	GL2	HL1	HL2	Total
• Free/spontaneous and meaningful practice/response										681							681
• Controlled practice/response focusing on meaning and uses of structures (elicitations and responses)	9846	2819	2044	1251	6339	1832	7777	3374	1892	9929			1536	498	3372	3724	56133
• Controlled practice/response focusing on forms (elicitations and responses)	611	9170	6486	1784	2258	7349	100	1676	4833	3523	1505	687	5629	5446	251	465	51873
• Rhetorical/mechanical response to teacher's questions, either perfunctory or empathic (elicitations and responses)	74		1100	703	183	90	523	96	317	270	56		145	261	925	354	5097
• Reading by individual students				2996				1149	538				541				5225
• Whole class choral reading					1231	258			1495	1639				384			5007
<i>Total weightings for student practice</i>	<i>10531</i>	<i>11989</i>	<i>9630</i>	<i>6734</i>	<i>10011</i>	<i>9529</i>	<i>8400</i>	<i>6295</i>	<i>9175</i>	<i>16042</i>	<i>1561</i>	<i>687</i>	<i>7851</i>	<i>6589</i>	<i>4548</i>	<i>4543</i>	<i>124016</i>

Note: *Weightings for explanation of grammatical terms were not included in the total weightings as they often overlapped with explanation of grammar rules, usage or forms.

Table 6.6 Activities related to teacher instruction in order of importance

<i>Teacher instruction</i>	AL1	AL2	BL1	BL2	CL1	CL2	DL1	DL2	EL1	EL2	FL1	FL2	GL1	GL2	HL1	HL2
• Explanation of grammatical terms	4	3	5	4	5	4	5	4								4
• Explanation of grammar rules and uses	2	1	2	3	2	2	1	2		2			1	4	1	1
• Explanation of grammatical forms	3	4	4	2	3	3	3	3	2	4	1	1	4	2		
• Explanation of vocabulary			3	5	4	5	4		3	3			3	1	2	2
• Administrative instructions (including instructions for student practice and teacher talk to establish rapport)	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	3	3	3

Note: 1 = most important (with the heaviest weighting)

5 = least important (with the lightest weighting)

Table 6.7 Activities related to student practice or responses in order of importance

<i>Student practice or responses</i>	AL1	AL2	BL1	BL2	CL1	CL2	DL1	DL2	EL1	EL2	FL1	FL2	GL1	GL2	HL1	HL2
• Free, spontaneous, meaningful practice										4						
• Controlled practice focusing on meaning and uses of structures (elicitations and responses)	1	2	2	3	1	2	1	1	2	1			2	2	1	1
• Controlled practice focusing on forms (elicitations and responses)	2	1	1	2	2	1	3	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	3	2
• Rhetorical/mechanical response to teacher's questions, either perfunctory or empathic (elicitations and responses)	3		3	4	4	4	2	4	5	5	2		4	4	2	3
• Reading by individual students				1				3	4				3			
• Whole class choral reading					3	3			3	3				3		

Note: 1 = most important (with the heaviest weighting)

5 = least important (with the lightest weighting)

Table 6.8 Analysis of non-whole class group oral practice and individual written practice

Teacher A	Lesson 1	Lesson 2
Individual written practice	Nil	4 mins. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underlining prepositional phrases of time (40 secs.) • Answering comprehension questions in complete sentences (3 mins.)
Group oral practice	Nil	Nil
Teacher B	Lesson 1	Lesson 2
Individual written practice	4 mins. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cloze exercise (1 min.) • Cloze exercise (3 mins.) 	2 mins. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise on changing the form of the verb (1 min.) • Answering comprehension questions in complete sentences (1 min.)
Group oral practice	Nil	Nil
Teacher C	Lesson 1	Lesson 2
Individual written practice	4 mins. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cloze exercise (2 mins) • Cloze exercise (1 min) • Writing sentences (over 30 secs.) 	Nil
Group oral practice	Nil	6 mins <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pair work in asking and answering questions (with some written practice)

Teacher D	Lesson 1	Lesson 2
Individual written practice	Over 3 mins. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matching pictures with sentences (1 min.) Writing a dialogue (can be pair work) (over 1.5 mins., unfinished when the first lesson of the double period ended) 	5.5 mins. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rewriting sentences in different ways (2 mins.) Answering comprehension questions in complete sentences (3.5 mins.)
Group oral practice	5 mins. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pair oral activity in giving instructions (plus written work of sentence completion) 	Nil
Teacher E	Lesson 1	Lesson 2
Individual written practice	4 mins. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Underlining and labeling words (verbs) (4 mins.) 	7.5 mins <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading and cloze exercise (3.5 mins.) Reading and cloze exercise (4 mins.)
Group oral practice	Nil	8.5 mins. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oral discussion (pair work) with writing (menu design) (8.5 mins)
Teacher F	Lesson 1	Lesson 2
Individual written practice	9 mins. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sentence completion exercise (3 mins.) Sentence transformation exercise (4 mins.) 	6.5 mins. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correction of words in inappropriate parts of speech (6.5 mins.)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sentence transformation exercise (2 mins.) 	
Group oral practice	Nil	Nil
Teacher G	Lesson 1	Lesson 2
Individual written practice	7 mins. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sentence completion exercise (3 mins.) Sentence completion exercise (1.5 mins.) Sentence writing exercise (2.5 mins.) 	4 mins. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Underlining structures (4 mins.)
Group oral practice	Nil	Nil
Teacher H	Lesson 1	Lesson 2
Individual written practice	Nil	? 9 mins. (pair) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sentence writing (?4 mins.) Sentence writing with some discussion in pairs (?5 mins.)
Group oral practice	2 mins. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pair oral practice (2 mins.) 	Nil

Note: ? indicates that the time spent was not so clear. Because of the low ability of the students, the teacher (Teacher H) had to explain her instructions continuously to the students. Therefore sometimes it was not clear whether she was giving whole class instructions, or explanations to individual students while they were doing individual or pair work.

Table 6.9 Number of total turns and long turns of over 15 and 30 lines in each lesson

Lessons	AL1	AL2	BL1	BL2	CL1	CL2	DL1	DL2	EL1	EL2	FL1	FL2	GL1	GL2	HL1	HL2
No. of total turns	155	194	150	134	175	172	111	76	146	217*	20	14	110	112	84	72
No. of long turns (15 lines or more) #	4	2	4	5	4	4	7	6	1	2	2	5	3	3	5	3
No. of very long turns (30 lines or more)	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	3	0	0	0	0

* The second lesson of Teacher E was longer than all the other lessons as it was a double period. This should be taken into account when comparing the quantitative data of this lesson with the others.

The length of the turns means the length of the transcriptions in English on A4 paper. For example, 15 lines or more means 15 lines or more of transcription. Usually longer transcriptions mean more lesson time, but there is no absolute relationship between the length of transcription and time spent, as it depends on the pace of speech delivery and whether there are pauses in-between.

Table 6.10 Occurrences of grammatical terms in the lessons

AL1	AL2
future (simple) (tense) 9	noun(s) 25
(if-) conditional (sentence(s)) 6	noun phrase(s) 19
if-clause 5	(prepositional) (phrase(s)) (of time) 15
present tense/present simple (tense) 5	preposition(s) 14
main clause 5	prepositional phrases of place 1
verb(s) 5	
clause(s) 3	

BL1	BL2
subject(s) 11 object(s) 7 pronouns 5 possessive adjective(s) 4 personal pronoun(s) 3 verb 1	base form 16 (simple) past tense 9 irregular (verb(s)) (tenses) 8 verb(s) 7 regular verb(s) 6 verb-to-be 3 規則(變化)(的動詞) [Chinese translation for regular verbs] 3 不規則變化的動詞 [Chinese translation for irregular verbs] 2 subject 1
CL1	CL2
present continuous tense 25 verb(s) (form) 25 negative (statement) (sentence) 12 verb-to-be 11 simple present tense 8 positive (statement) 5 tense 4 subject 2 basic form 2 question form 1	verb(s) 24 regular (verbs) 21 (simple) present tense 15 past tense 12 irregular (verbs) 11 tense 2 basic form 1

DL1	DL2
<p>(past) (future) tense(s) 9</p> <p>original form of the verb 6</p> <p>verb(s) (form) 6</p> <p>imperative 6</p> <p>auxiliary (word)/(verb) 4</p> <p>present tense 4</p> <p>subject-verb agreement 3</p> <p>subject 3</p> <p>conditional 3</p>	<p>connective(s) 20</p> <p>clauses 5</p> <p>phrases 4</p> <p>connectives of reason and result 3</p>
EL1	EL2
<p>plural (words) (verbs) 33</p> <p>singular(verb) 29</p> <p>noun(s) 10</p> <p>verb(s) 10</p> <p>countable 9</p> <p>uncountable 9</p> <p>subject 3</p> <p>agreement 2</p>	<p>uncountable (noun) 13</p> <p>countable 8</p> <p>plural (form) 5</p> <p>negative 4</p> <p>singular 1</p>

FL1	FL2
past tense 18 negative (form) 13 modal verb 13 present tense 12 tense(s) 11 future tense 7 subject(s) 7 verb 5 (bare) (to-) infinitive 5 adjective 2 positive 1	noun(s) 48 adjective(s) 36 verb(s) 28 adverb(s) 24 passive (voice/tense) [*passive tense 2] 11 article 11 parts of speech 3 present tense 3 past tense 3 active voice 3 past participle 3 singular 3 subject 1 uncountable 1
GL1	GL2
past tense 24 present tense 10 future tense 9 verb 7 conditional 4 tense 4 noun 3	present perfect tense 49 past tense 30 *-pp [past participle] 27 future tense 3 question form 2 過去式 [Chinese translation for past tense] 2
HL1	HL2
(simple) future tense 6 將來式 [Chinese translation for future tense] 6 present continuous tense 5 simple present tense 1	infinitive(s) 9 *(動詞)(的)原式 [Chinese translation for infinitive] 9 verb(s) 4 *不變式 1

Note: The number after each grammatical term indicates the number of times the teacher mentioned it in the lesson.

A. Structure of the lessons

Table 6.5 shows the weightings of activities in lessons in character counts. Activities in the lessons are put under two major categories, teacher instruction and student practice. As can be seen from Table 6.5, the weightings for teacher instruction are heavier in most of the lessons, indicating that the teacher-fronted type of teacher lecture received more emphasis compared to the more interactive student practice or elicitation of student responses.¹⁵ With the exception of Teachers A and E, all teachers put more emphasis on teacher instruction in both their lessons compared to student responses, although there were some variations in the relative emphasis of these two types of activities.

At the higher level of emphasis on teacher instruction were the weightings for the lessons of Teacher F, which were 6 to 16 times higher than those for student practice or responses. At the other end was Teacher C, whose weightings for both types of activities were quite close, with teacher instruction only slightly exceeding student responses by 20 to 40 per cent. In contrast to the other teachers, Teachers A and E put more emphasis on student practice or responses compared to teacher instruction, with the former being higher by around 7 per cent for Teacher A, and 30 to 140 per cent for Teacher E.

The extent of emphasis on teacher instruction or student responses can also be seen from the number of total turns and long turns in the lessons. As can be seen from Table 6.9, the number of turns in the lessons varied greatly. The second lesson of Teacher E can be excluded from the comparison, as it was the only double-period lesson, while all the other lessons were single-period ones. For the rest of the lessons, the total number of turns ranged from 14 (FL2) to 194 (AL2), indicating that some teachers gave extensive teacher instructions while others focused on eliciting student responses. The number of turns

¹⁵ It should be noted that differences in weightings should not be taken as absolute in reflecting the lengths of time spent in the lessons. A longer transcription of teacher talk does not necessarily mean a longer time spent in the lesson, as elicitations of student responses are often time-consuming although it may not require a lot of teacher or student talk. The weightings should therefore be considered in relative terms only.

were quite close (around 150 to 200) for the lessons of Teachers A, B, C and E (with respect to Lesson 1), which shows that the lessons were quite interactive with frequent elicitations of student responses. While Teacher G is somewhere in the middle, Teacher H, and in particular Teacher F, relied more on teacher instruction.

Similarly, the number of long turns also indicate that some of the teachers tended to lecture more than the others, such as Teachers B, D and F. In the case of Teacher F, the number of long turns was particularly high in proportion to the number of total turns in the lessons. There were also a few very long turns of over 30 lines of lecturing in the lessons of Teacher B, D and F. (Please refer to Table 6.9.)

In most of the lessons, there was a mixture of teacher instruction and student practice or response, which often occurred alternately. Except for the lessons of Teachers A and E, most of the lessons started quite deductively as teachers explained grammatical rules or forms first and elicited student practice or responses afterwards. A small number of teachers, such as Teachers C and D, tried to be more interactive before their explanation by eliciting short responses from students concerning their grammatical knowledge or for establishing rapport. The lessons of Teachers A and E were structured more inductively, as they started with long elicitations of responses from students either for meaningful-focused practice or for establishing rapport.

Table 6.6 presents the types of activities related to teacher instruction in order of importance. As can be seen from the table, administrative instructions received most attention in the lessons. Aside from a total of three lessons of Teacher G and H, all the other lessons had a score of either 1 or 2 for this aspect. The second most important type of activities with scores 1 or 2 was explanation of grammar rules and uses, followed by explanation of grammatical forms and explanation of vocabulary. Slightly more than half

of the lessons also contained some explanations of grammatical terms, but these were fairly infrequent.

Types of activities related to student practice or responses are shown in Table 6.7. Both types of controlled practice, either focusing on meaning and uses of structures, or focusing on forms, were given most emphasis, with the former having a score of 1 in 7 lessons, and the latter having a score of 1 in 8 lessons. The only other type of activity with a score of 1 was “reading by individual students”, in one lesson of Teacher B. Reading by individual students or whole-class choral reading were strategies used by Teachers B, C, D, E, and G in some parts of the lessons. Otherwise they were not used by Teachers A, F and H. Rhetorical or mechanical responses to teachers’ questions featured in most lessons, although less time was spent compared to most of the other activities. Free, spontaneous and meaningful practice occurred in only one lesson of Teacher E. In short, most of the student practice often looked like drilling similar to the type of grammar exercises in the grammar books, as students kept repeating the structures, although sometimes their repetition of the structures involved more meaningful responses with a focus on meaning and uses.

Table 6.8 gives more ideas about the types of student practice which occurred in non-whole-class situations like group oral practice and individual written practice. As can be seen from the table, a great deal of the practice looked like the same kind of drilling which occurred in whole class activities. The writing practice involved underlining grammatical structures, cloze exercises, changing the forms of words and sentence re-writing (sentence transformation) and sentence completion exercises. A small amount of the practice involved more meaningful language production or use, such as short writing (e.g. writing sentences or dialogues) (Teacher D), and answering reading comprehension questions (Teacher D). Compared to individual written practice, group

oral practice occurred less often (in only 4 out of 16 lessons). Oral practice usually involved more meaningful communication, such as asking and answering questions (Teacher C), communicating meaningfully according to a given situation (Teacher D), and less structured discussion to complete a written task together (Teacher E).

In short, most of the lessons contained activities related to teacher instruction and student practice. Teacher instruction often looks like the “presentation” section of the Presentation-Practice-Production structure, while student practice looks like the “practice” section. However, there was rarely a clear division line between these two types of activities. Instead, teacher instruction and student practice alternated with each other and occurred in different amounts. It can only be said that most of the lessons contained elements of presentation and practice, and the teachers put different levels of emphasis on them.

B. Grammar explanation and metalanguage

Table 6.6 presents the order of importance of activities related to teacher instruction. The major activities which are given high values of 1 or 2 are “administrative or task/activity instructions”, “explanation of grammar rules” and “explanation of grammatical forms”.

The second most important type of teacher instruction is grammar explanation. Most often, it took the form of explanations of the grammatical rules and how they could be used in communicating meaning. The following is Teacher C’s explanation of the Present Continuous Tense:

Yes, we have, we have. But you don’t know which one up to this moment. OK, so, last time we talked about the simple present tense. We know there are three usage, up to this moment you learn three uses about it. About the truth, about the fact, and also about the habit, OK? And today, we are going to learn another tense. That should be the ... which one? Present continuous tense. Maybe you have learnt the present

continuous tense in your primary school, right? OK, so let's see what meant by present continuous tense and when we have to use the present continuous tense. So here, [*****] something that is doing now. If you want to talk about something that you are doing now, you can use present continuous tense. I give you an example. Here, my father is watching TV now. That should be the present continuous tense. Do you know this? Do you know this one? Yes or no? The present continuous tense which [*****] that is doing now. This is the example. OK, listen, listen, listen to my sentence. Tell me whether, whether I am using the tense in the correct way. For example, listen, I am opening the window. Listen, I am opening the window. Am I correct to use present continuous tense? I am opening the window. Is it correct? (Turn 9, CL1)

Teacher C started his explanation by referring to students' experience of learning the Simple Present Tense before, which provided a kind of connection with the Present Continuous Tense he targeted in that lesson. He then explained the situation for using the tense, and gave an example of using it in a sentence and demonstrated it with an action.

Some teachers explained the grammatical rules and uses by analysing the conditions for using the structures more closely and using more metalanguage, as in the following example from Teacher D's lesson.

O-r-i-g-i ... n-a-l. That's right. The original form of the verb. No change of the sentence, and no need of subject-verb agreement. OK? So, it is easy therefore, to give instructions, right? For example I say Close your book now. ... Nobody follows my instruction. What does that mean? Do you understand my instruction? Close your book now. I say it, to test whether you can follow my instruction or not, OK? So, I use the word close, OK? It is because ... why? Do you know why? We use imperative. Because I am talking to, you. Do you understand? So, you ...OK ... so therefore ... I don't need to say you close the book, I don't need to say that, OK, because I have been talking to you already. And then if you, you, ... if the subject is you, then you don't need any changes. If it is he or she, we have to say does or talks. Do you understand? But it is you, OK. I'm talking to you, the subject is you, then I don't need, well, I don't need to change, OK, the verb, OK? Do you understand? Because I am talking to you, it is the present tense. Do you understand? So therefore, also, you know no change of tenses, no future or past tense. Instead, it is, at the bottom, the present moment, OK? (Turn 21, DL1)

Some of the other grammatical explanations focused more on grammatical forms than meaning, as in the following extract from Teacher A's lesson. Here Teacher A analysed the structure of a conditional sentence by explaining the components of the sentence and the tense of the verb in it.

So, look at this sentence, how many parts are there? Two, OK, two parts. So actually this sentence is a combination of two ... clauses, two clauses, OK? We call this part ... we call this part the main clause ... Can you see that? We call this, we call this part the main clause, the main body. We call this part we can see the verb in here ... we call it the ... because ... So when you use ... conditional sentences ... to talk about ... something that is possible and likely to happen, at present or in the future, we will say something like this. If it rains, I will stay at home. So, I want you to pay attention to the verb. What tense do we use in the if-clause? What tense do we use in the if-clause? (Turn 43, AL1)

Some teachers focused even more on details concerning the restrictions on using some structures and how different word forms are used to suit different structures, as in the following two extracts where Teacher F explained the conditions/restrictions for using different modal verbs.

OK, correct. Remember that, after can, can is a modal verb. Why you have to call that modal verb? OK, this one has some characteristic. You know that, swim, swim in this sentence is a verb. In front of it, the subject is Mary, OK? She, so, you have to add -s at the end. But, if you use a modal verb can, then, what happen after can? What happen after this modal verb? Always bare infinitive. Remember that no -s, no -ing, no -ed. This one, always bare infinitive. In this one, no to, not to- infinitive, no to, OK? How about the past tense? Mary's [*****] OK, xxx, try to do this one. Still, I want to use can. (Turn 3, FL1)

Good. Yes, it's correct. Eh, we won't change the verb after the modal verb, but we change the modal verb, OK? Can becomes could. And after this modal verb will, no change. This one is bare infinitive. No change. ... OK, now, today we are going to look at another thing. If I say Mary can swim. I can use another word. ... Be able to,

OK? Be able to. Able is an adjective, adjective. And after able, you have to use to, OK. Now, Mary can swim ... use able to to change this one, this sentence. It becomes Mary is able to swim. OK, is able to. And then this one, Mary ... this one was in past tense, so Mary was able to swim. But remember that, we have to use is able to. Remember the to, and this one, a verb, according to the tense. OK, able to and this one, is a verb, past tense and past tense. And one more thing. For example, able to, you can, you can do it in future tense. For example, Mary will be able to swim. OK? you can use this one in future tense, will be able to. But it's now difficult, remember that can can change to able to. (Turn 5, FL1)

Here, the teacher's explanation focused on the restrictions on grammatical forms like modal verbs and infinitives. The emphasis is on accuracy in using the forms rather than using the structure for communicating meaning.

Aside from the explanation of the grammatical rules, uses and forms, some of the teachers also explained the grammatical terminology. This did not receive a great deal of attention in most of the lessons, but at least five of the eight teachers gave this type of explanation sometimes. Generally, the teachers did not put too much emphasis on explaining the grammatical terms. Teachers A and D only gave occasional and short explanations. Explanations given by Teachers B, C and H were a little more detailed, but still received less emphasis than the other types of teacher instruction and activities in the lessons. When teachers explained grammatical terms, they often used one or more of the following strategies. A few of these were demonstrated in Lesson 2 of Teacher A as below.

Very good. Prepositions. So, now, today I want you to learn to revise the prepositions you have learned in primary school. Look at Part A. [*****] preposition. Look at the structure. Number 1. So a preposition links or relates different parts of a sentence. For example, we say we usually play basketball in the afternoon. All right? Is there a different type of prepositions? ... And, prepositions of time are used to talk about time in different ways. For example, we have in, on, at. So, these are all prepositions of time. (Turn 29, AL2)

Teacher A explained the situation for using a preposition, gave an example of a preposition in a sentence and then referred to other examples of prepositions of time more specifically. Her explanation, in short, was an explanation of the uses supported by examples.

Another strategy was explanation by analysing the form, as Teacher B explained “verb-to-be” and “base form”.

Saw, yes. Well, eh, if you turn to page 48, if you turn to page 48, it tells you for the verb-to-be, the base form, the base form is be, the base form is be. But then you change according to the subject I was, we were, OK. And, we have another example, we have enjoy, e-n-j-o-y. We have the base form of the word enjoy. (Turn 6, BL2)

Now the verbs have been changed into the past tense. OK? Now, try to write the base form of the underlined verbs. Now what does it mean by the base form? Go, went, gone - go is the base form. See, saw, seen - see is the base form. Yes, yes. So, number 1 for example, he went shopping at Mongkok, Monday last Sunday. The base form of went is ... ? (Turn 17, BL2)

A similar strategy was employed by Teacher C for explaining “regular” and “irregular verbs” in Lesson 2.

Should be ... past tense. Do you get it? Yes or no? And here, look at this box. You may find that the verbs in the box, the past tense of the verb in this box, we have to put -ed at the end of the verb, to make it to become past tense. We add ed. So this kind of verb, we call it ... regular verbs. Regular, OK? We say regular verbs to mean if you want to change the verb from present tense to become past tense, we have to put -ed. So, that should be regular. Understand regular verb? Yes or no? So, here, we can say, regular verbs. That means we add -ed after the verbs. That should be regular verbs. OK, [*****] this word, regular verbs. (Turn 49, CL2)

We say and then add -ed. No, no, no, right? We say take. We say, don't say taked. No, We change the verb to become another ... form. We spell the word in other ways.

So, we call them irregular verbs, irregular. That means for these verbs, we don't put -ed. We change the spelling. For regular, ... just like this one, for regular, we put ... What do we put? (Turn 55, CL2)

-ed, after the verbs. But for irregular, we don't add -ed, we change the verbs. So, let's see, what meant by irregular verbs? For irregular verbs, we spell, OK, they are spelt in different ways. We want to change it to become past tense. Understand the meaning of irregular verbs and regular verbs? Yes or no? (Turn 57, CL2)

Sometimes Chinese translations were used to explain grammatical terms. This was a strategy used sometimes by Teachers B and H. Some of the translations, like the one used by Teacher H on "the infinitive", are in fact more meaningful than the original word in expressing the grammatical meaning indicated by the term, that is, it is the original form of the verb without any changes or inflections.

Must 解一定或必須, 跟著給些 example, 給一兩個 example 你們。我們要依照交通規則過馬路, 我們不能在課室裏亂說話, 全部這些字, must 後面的動詞, 都是用動詞的原式。甚麼叫原式? 不變的, OK? 我你一些動詞, 你把原式圈出來給我看。[Cantonese which means the following: "Must" means certain or necessary. Then I will give you some examples, give you one or two examples. We must follow traffic regulations in crossing the road. We must not talk anytime we like in the classroom. All these words, the verbs after 'must', are all the original forms of the verbs. What is the original form? It means not changed, OK? I will find some verbs, and you will circle the original forms for me to see.] ... For example ... keep, keeping, kept, and then keeps. Xxx, xxx, can you tell me which one is the 動詞原式, 或者 [Cantonese which means the original form of the verb, or] infinitive? Which one? Number one, two, three, four, which one? (Turn 9, HL2)

Rather than explaining the grammatical terms, most of the teachers more often just referred to the grammatical terms in their lessons from time to time. However, there were differences in the frequency of use and the types of grammatical terms used between lessons. While some of them used more basic and familiar grammatical terms, like subject, verb, tense, plural and singular, others used less familiar ones like base form, possessive adjective and prepositional phrase of place. Some of the teachers also used a

greater variety of grammatical terms and used these more frequently than the others. Table 6.10 presents the grammatical terms used in the lessons. They are arranged according to descending frequency from the top.

As can be seen from the table, while Teacher H referred to only four to five different grammatical terms in both of her lessons, Teacher F used up to 11 or 14 terms in hers. Some of the basic grammatical terms were repeated many times within one lesson, especially when they referred to the targeted grammatical structure in the lesson. For example, the term “noun(s)” (one major part of speech) was mentioned 48 times in the second lesson of Teacher F, while “present perfect tense” was mentioned 49 times in the second lesson of Teacher G. The following extracts show how frequently Teacher G referred to the grammatical term in her lesson.

OK, now, today we will, that means you, you remember, present perfect tense, present perfect tense. This is a new, a new one for you, present perfect tense. You have learned present tense, OK, present tense, past tense and future tense. And now, we will go to present perfect tense. Altogether read it to me, present perfect tense. (Turn 1, GL2)

So this one, it is the past tense. You learned it already, past tense, because of the word last night. OK, because of the word last night. So, it is a past action, so we use past tense. Now, this is focused on what happened OK, last night. Then now, we go to the present perfect tense, OK? ... OK, look at this one. So this one, it is past tense. We focus on the, OK, we focus on what happened. What we did, OK. So now this one, I have studied in this school for two years. I have studied ... in this school for two years. So this one, it is the present perfect tense. Present perfect tense. So, it focus on how long. It focus on how long, how long. Do you remember the meaning of how long? (Turn 5, GL2)

While in Turn 1, Teacher G introduced the topic by repeating the term “present perfect tense” to focus students’ attention, in Turn 5, she referred to it to draw a comparison with the “simple past tense”, which was also repeated quite a few times..

C. Explanation of vocabulary

As can be seen in Table 6.6, at some time in the lessons, six of the eight teachers explained words, expressions, or sentences. It was the second most important activity in the lessons of Teacher H. For teacher G, it was the most important activity for Lesson 2, although it received less emphasis in Lesson 1. Some time was also spent on vocabulary explanation in the lessons of Teacher B, C, D and E.

In explaining vocabulary, teachers most often use a similar method. They paraphrased the meaning of the word(s) and gave examples, such as what Teacher C did below.

What's the meaning of guide book here? For example, if you go to watch a show, maybe there is a book for you, a piece of paper for you, telling you what you can see in the show, telling you the programme about the show. This should be a guidebook. Understand guidebook, OK? (Turn 63, CL1)

Sometimes teachers used Chinese translations for expressions or sentences. Below was how Teacher B translated a sentence into Chinese.

So, when your answer is correct, give a tick. If you think it is wrong, a cross and then you write down the correct answer. Tim would not allow him to help ... 阿 Tim 不會准許他來幫忙。 [Cantonese words which mean Tim would not allow him to help] (Turn 95, BL1)

Teacher G and Teacher H used Cantonese to translate words and sentences even more frequently, because of the weak vocabulary of their classes. Below is an extract from Teacher H's lesson.

譬如我們用 must 作一句句子, 我們必須, 必須依照交通規則過馬路。 [Cantonese words which mean For example, we use must to make a sentence. We must, must follow traffic rules for crossing the road.] We must follow traffic rules. [Teacher

wrote the words on the board while speaking.] Traffic rules. Traffic 交通, rules 規則。Then next one. 譬如你們是否在課室內大叫大吵? 可不可以玩? [Cantonese words which mean For example, can you talk and shout loudly in the classroom? Can you play?] (Turn 7, HL2)

Three of the teachers also commented on the role of vocabulary in grammar lessons or English lessons in the interviews. Teacher G, for example, stressed the importance of vocabulary as follows.

In upper forms you can teach some more again, but you can't focus everything on grammar. Since when you go to Form 4 and Form 5, in fact for grammar, the most important thing is the vocabulary. That's what I feel. Because for the reading, if they don't understand the vocabulary at all, but they understand the grammar well, they can't understand the whole reading passage. And if they don't understand the vocabulary, they can't answer the questions. I personally feel this. Therefore when they go to Form 4 and Form 5, I think vocabulary building is more important. (Turn 50, G11)

Similar views were expressed by Teacher H, who believed that lack of vocabulary was a greater barrier than lack of grammar in using the language. She commented: "They know the rules, but not ... if they don't know the vocabulary, they will get [*****]. They will get stuck" (Turn 18, H12). Also, students lacked the confidence to use the language mainly because they did not understand the vocabulary: "They are willing to do it, but it doesn't mean that they are not reliant. They are very reliant. I need to explain to them what the word means and in the whole sentence there is no word they don't know before they dare doing it" (Turn 20, H12).

More interestingly, not only the teachers of lower ability classes felt vocabulary was important. Teacher E, who was teaching Band 1 students, believed that students needed to be exposed to more vocabulary in conjunction with grammar teaching. To do this, the structures can be connected to other expressions and the context can be widened instead

of being restricted to a narrow theme. This is useful especially for students with higher ability who are particularly keen to learn more vocabulary (Turn 15-32, 102-104, EI2).

D. Administrative instructions

According to Table 6.6, administrative or task/activity instructions was the type of teacher instruction activity which received most attention in the lessons. It was the activity with the highest weighting in eight of the lessons with a score of 1, and it had a score of 2 for five of the lessons. As shown in the extract below from Teacher B's lesson, instructions were often given to guide students through exercises or practice, so that students understood what to do and they really focused on the work they were expected to do.

So number 1. If you understand the passage, understand the the story, that shopping story, it should not be too difficult. Where did Gigi go shopping last week? Now, where did ... Gigi go shopping ... last week? Xxx, so we are talking about something that happened last week. Oh, yes, now you are smarter. Now, write in complete sentence. Write in complete sentence. Write in complete sentence. Now the rest of you, you write your answer. Come on. You show your answer on the paper. [*****] [Pause for around 30 seconds for students to work out their answers.] OK? OK, now, oh, do you see the answer to number 1, by xxx, our friend. Is it correct or not? OK, let me read it for you. Yes, keep your ... -sh. OK, now take a look. Number 1. Yes, [*****] are you talking? No? Are you sure? (Turn 109, BL2)

Some of the lessons with the highest score of 1 for administrative of task/activity instructions were comparatively more activity-based or task-based lessons and less grammar-based than the other lessons. This was evident in the lessons of Teacher A and Teacher E. Here is an example of the long instructions Teacher E gave when she asked the students to perform a task, that is, to design a menu for a teenager like them:

Ah! You know. You know. What's that ... what is it? ... Countable, right, OK? Page 105 please, Longman book, 105. OK, now you see Mark's problem and what he

should do now. Would you please look at page 105 and design a day, OK a day's menu, a daily menu for Mark, OK? What he should eat in the breakfast, OK, lunch and dinner. OK, you can talk with your neighbour, OK? And see you can design a very good one. OK, tell us why ... OK, so you work in pairs and tell us what your advice is. Anyone who want to tell us, he will give, he will be given the chance. OK, OK, so you work in pairs. Work in pairs. [Pause for around 2.5 minutes for students to do pair work.] Attention please. Your friend ask a very very good question. How old is Mark? How old should he be? Come on, give me the age. How old are you now? (Turn 201, EL2)

E. Student practice

Table 6.5 shows the weightings of the two major types of activities in the lessons, teacher instruction and student practice. Although teacher instruction had heavy weightings in most of the lessons (those of Teachers B, C, D, F, G and H), student practice/responses also received considerable attention. In fact, in the lessons of Teacher A and E, they were given more emphasis than teacher instruction.

Of the six types of activities shown under "student practice or responses in Table 6.7, "controlled practice focusing on forms" received most emphasis. It was rated "1" as the most important activity in eight out of the sixteen lessons, and "2" in six of them. The second most important type of activity was "controlled practice focusing on meaning", which received slightly lower ratings of "1" in seven lessons and "2" in six lessons. Both types of activities, especially "controlled practice focusing on forms", were quite similar to written grammar exercises aimed at drilling students for using grammatical structures. "Controlled practice focusing on meaning" was a little more meaning-focused, which means students needed to consider whether they used the form to communicate meaning, instead of just repeating the correct form mechanically. Two more types of activities which were similar to drilling were "whole class choral reading" and "reading by individual students", which were used by five teachers, although two of them used them in only one of their lessons. The most meaningful type of practice, "free/spontaneous and

meaningful practice/responses” was used only once by Teacher E near the end of her second lesson. All these indicate that practice or responses from students were largely form-focused and repetitive, rather than spontaneous and meaningful.

The following is an example of “controlled practice focusing on meaning”, when Teacher D asked the students to make sentences to give instructions to their classmates.

22	Student:	Eh, Stand up and turn around.
23	Teacher:	Pardon?
24	Student:	Stand up and [*****]
25	Teacher:	Who are you talking to? You are not talking to me. I said you talk to another ...
26	Student:	Xxx, xxx.
27	Teacher:	Xxx? You tell her, what to do.
28	Student:	Eh, you stand up and turn around.
28	Teacher:	Ha ha. Stand up and turn around. OK? You don't even need to say you. You just say, xxx, stand up and turn around, OK? Fine. Thank you. Xxx, you go on.
30	Student:	Hit me now. Stand up and check your ... [Other students laughed.]
31	Teacher:	Stand up and what ...?
32	Student:	Hand.
33	Teacher:	And check your hand. OK, thank you. Xxx, you give instructions to another classmate please.
34	Student:	Stand up and ask for ... [Students laughed.]
35	Teacher:	Stand up and ask for pity? [*****] Xxx, how about you?

(Turn 22 to 35, DL1)

The following is an example of “controlled practice focusing on forms” from the second lesson of Teacher B. It is quite different from the previous extract, as the focus is on changing the verbs to past tense forms, without any reference to the meaning and the

conditions for using them. It looks like completing a decontextualised grammar exercise with discrete items.

43	Teacher:	Now, number 1, from is, what do we get? Come on, tell me your answer.
44	Students:	Was.
45	Teacher:	Was. OK. From are, we have ...?
46	Students:	Were.
47	Teacher:	Were. From do not ...?
48	Students:	Did not.
49	Teacher:	Did not. From does not ...?
50	Students:	Did not.
51	Teacher:	Also did not. Now, from walk ...?
52	Students:	Walk.
53	Teacher:	Walked. W-a-l-k ...? –ed.

(Turn 43 to 53, BL2)

A more comprehensive picture of the amount of emphasis on student practice/responses can only be gained by also taking into consideration non-whole class activities like group/pair oral practice and individual written practice as well. The data for these are presented in Table 6.8. As shown in the table, individual written practice was used most often in the lessons (by all the eight teachers in thirteen of their lessons). These were mostly form-focused exercises such as cloze, underlining, and guided sentence writing practice. Less frequently, some meaning-focused exercises featured like reading comprehension exercises with questions to answer. The more meaning-focused and task-based type of oral practice activities were used in a smaller number of lessons (in one of the lessons each of Teachers C, D, E and H). Most of the activities were quite heavily guided. Only in the second lesson of Teacher E more spontaneous and free language production occurred.

6.5 Teachers' grammar teaching concepts

In general, most of the lessons looked more grammar-based than task-based, with a mixture of teacher explanation of the rules, uses and forms of the grammatical structures, and repeated student practice, mostly focusing on grammatical forms, although meaningful use was also attended to sometimes. Most of the time, teacher instruction received a little more emphasis than student responses, which were mostly form-focused repetitive practice rather than the spontaneous language production most valued in communicative and task-based approaches.

A small number of the lessons were slightly more task-based, with a greater emphasis on meaningful student practice, such as the lessons of Teacher A, C, D, and E. Otherwise, most of the lessons were similar to the presentation and practice parts of the PPP structure, omitting the more meaningful and spontaneous part of production. In fact, although the material provided to the teacher to be used in Lesson 2 included a “production” section, only four (Teachers A, C, D and E) out of the eight teachers used the material or used it partially. Only Teacher E (in her Lesson 2) really asked students to do oral practice in a way which was close to the task-based ideal of free/spontaneous and meaningful production (Turn 214-215, EL2).

What occurred in the lessons was further explained in the interviews through teachers' comments on TBLT. Table 6.11 shows the number of character counts of the teachers' comments in the interviews coded according to 16 themes, which received different levels of emphasis. As can be seen from the table, teachers' “concept of TBLT/grammar teaching in TBLT” had the second highest number of character counts. Their views will be presented in the following section.

Table 6.11 Total weightings of teachers' comments coded according to major themes in the interviews

<i>Teachers' grammar teaching concepts</i>	<i>Total weightings</i>
• Grammar and the curriculum	31696
• Organisation of teaching	18655
• Grammar explanation	51553
• Metalanguage	17937
• Grammar and meaning	10173
• Practice	27403
• Concept of TBLT / grammar teaching in TBLT	79673
• Usefulness of tasks	11199
• Contextualisation	7651
• Integration of input and output	18313
• General teaching effectiveness	29133
<i>Teachers' view on / knowledge of the grammar teaching environment</i>	
• Second language teaching theory and research	1533
• Educational and / or language teaching policies	22009
• Curriculum ideas	28733
• Teaching materials	68088
• Other factors and limitations	88264

6.5.1 Teachers' concepts of grammar teaching and TBLT

Most of the teachers believed that grammar teaching, or explicit teaching of grammar, is important. Some teachers held very strong views about the necessity of teaching grammar. Teacher C, for example, believed that grammar was the only thing teachable for English:

For learning English, the only thing that we teachers can teach is grammar. ... besides grammar, for other aspects of learning English such as vocabulary, if the

student is diligent and he does more preparation and uses the dictionary more, he can also learn it without our help. But for grammar sometimes they really don't understand the rules and we need to train them for the rules. So I think grammar is important. (Turn 114, C11)

Teacher F also asserted that teaching grammar is absolutely necessary under the task-based approach.

It is a must. Since we are learning a second language, it is impossible not to teach grammar, as it is not our mother language. For most students, their exposure to the language is not adequate. If there is a proper environment for them and they can learn from their daily life interaction and communication, then it is not a problem. In Hong Kong, most of the students are not in such a situation. They don't have family backgrounds which can provide them with a lot of resources. I think if you learn a language, no matter it is English or other languages or other countries, you need to know the grammar.

(Turn 18, F11)

Other teachers believed that grammar had to be taught anyway, since it helps students to build up a foundation for using English (Turn 50, G11); grammar is useful input and knowing the correct form can facilitate communication (Turn 47, A11); both analysis of grammar and use of grammatical structures should receive attention (Turn 119-122, D12), and only low banding schools do not teach grammar (Turn 75-80, D12).

However, the teachers had different views about how grammar could be integrated into TBLT. Teacher C, for example, saw grammar teaching and the task-based approach as two separate and unconnected things (Turn 66-68, 191-192, C11). He believed whether it was necessary to teach grammar under the task-based approach was something "arguable" (Turn 188-192, C12). It is also very time-consuming to teach grammar using the task-based approach. The teacher suggested that grammar could be taught separately, instead of being integrated into the task-based approach. It is better to use more direct

methods to teach grammar, as using the task-based approach is very time-consuming.

It is not a matter of whether it is acceptable I think, for teaching grammar you have to use more straightforward methods in order to teach grammar. You can do this, using a roundabout way of task-based teaching of grammar, but if you consider what the children gain, isn't it better to use more direct methods? Of course students will gain, but you also need to consider the time. If you use the task-based method, it is very time-consuming for teaching this part. If I have a choice, I will choose to teach it more directly. I would rather in this part of the lesson when I have to round things up that I do such a thing ... (Turn 88, CI2)

Similar views that task-based teaching of grammar is time-consuming and more grammar-based teaching needs to be done were also held by Teacher F (Turn 49-50, FI1).

Some teachers believed that grammar could be integrated into the task-based approach, or they believed that they were teaching grammar using the task-based approach (e.g. Turn 6, AI1; Turn 14, EI1). The following are the comments of Teacher A about the change in grammar teaching after the implementation of the task-based approach:

Very much better. They learn these better. For example, when I taught them the -if conditionals. For a long time, I taught ... How did you teach it in the past? In the past we taught it like that: 0, 1, 2, 3 ... type 0, type 1, type 2, type 3. This will be about fact, that will be about likely and possible, and that will be unlikely and possible [impossible], then giving advice, and then something which ... will never happen. I explained to them, gave them an example, and taught them to distinguish these. But now, we teach these separately. For example, the passage may be on giving advice. For example, they have problems in getting along with friends. I will make use of this situation to teach the second conditional to give advice. Then I could see that they understand much better. They will never mix it up with the other structures. (Turn 200, AI2)

However, some teachers had more ambiguous views on integrating grammar into task-based teaching. Teacher E, for example, was quite task-based and meaning-focused

in her lessons compared to some other teachers. Although she seemed to believe that grammar could be a part of TBLT, she also maintained that grammatical structures could be the goal of teaching rather than the tasks. The tasks could be a means to accomplish the end of learning the structures. Such a view seems to deviate from the ideas about grammar teaching in the curriculum documents.

39 Researcher: If you teach grammar, will you target the task? That is, will you teach the structures to be used and expect them to use these later?

40 Teacher: The structures are targeted. The tasks help the structures but not the structures help the task. I'll remind them, look at what they are going to do. I'll teach according to the task they need to do. If there is material in the book, I'll use it; if there isn't, I'll design it myself. But I will change the concept, as there are structures that we have to cover.

(Turn 39-40, EI1)

In general, most of the teachers seemed to have quite positive views towards the task-based approach and its relationship to grammar teaching. They believed that it is helpful that grammar teaching is contextualised and follows a theme (Turn 67, AI1; Turn 139-140, HI1). A few teachers also highlighted the benefits of task-based teaching of grammar for student motivation.

They feel bored with grammar lessons, but now our grammar lessons are integrated with other things like oral tasks, so they may think this acceptable. But if we teach only grammar, it will be quite boring, probably. (Turn 118, DI2)

Teachers G and H also felt that communicative and task-based activities are more interesting to students (Turn 174, GI1; Turn 134, HI1)

However, it is not always possible to attain these ideals, because of the limitations in practising task-based teaching. Teacher C, for example, suggested that grammar could be taught separately, as it is very time-consuming to teach grammar using the task-based approach. Details of his views are presented in an extract from his interview earlier in this section (Turn 88, CI2).

Some teachers also believed that task-based teaching could cause discipline problems for large classes of 40 students or more, as it is difficult for the teacher to manage so many students when they are working on their tasks (e.g. Turn 66, BI2; Turn 78-80, DI1).

A few of the teachers also believed integrating grammar teaching in TBLT is an elusive ideal, as it is sometimes not supported by well-designed teaching materials. It is hard to produce materials which are really task-based, and sometimes even the textbook publishers cannot achieve this. Teacher D made the following comments:

I think it is very hard to comment on this. ... Because the book we are using uses the task-based approach. All the textbooks are supposed to be using the task-based approach. In fact, we use what is in the book, we follow the book to teach the grammar items. Our curriculum is the same. But can you say that it is very task-based? Eh, I think it may not be always related to teaching the previous passage for the whole task. They are probably ... But I hope to make things task-based, such as today we did something on helping the tourists, ... just that task on helping tourist, but not everything in the whole unit is related to completing a task. Sometimes you can't really achieve this. Even the books by the publishers may not achieve this I think. (Turn 22, DI1)

Teacher E believed that the idea of having one major theme could be restrictive and limit students' exposure to the language if the material was not well-designed. She viewed tasks as a tool rather than a target.

You can say that. ... But I think you have to be careful with using tasks. If they are restrictive, they can limit the students' exposure. If the task is not well-designed, [*****]. The situation may arouse their interest [*****], their thinking, creativity. I think task is a tool, whether you can use it well or not depends on the situation, whether the students can acquire something. (Turn 48, EI1)

Teacher E tried to resolve this dilemma of relating different things to the same theme and linking input to output on the one hand, and confining everything to the same context by making a distinction between “big tasks” and “small tasks”. She believed that it is not necessary to relate all the grammatical structures to a single theme; wider topics can also be involved. If the grammatical focus is very narrow, small tasks can be used and they do not need to be confined to one single theme (Turn 17-22, 41-44, EI2).

The idea that shortfalls in materials design are a barrier to accomplishing the ideal of teaching relevant grammatical structures as input to facilitate the production of the language in the tasks at the end of the task-based unit was raised repeatedly in the interviews with the other teachers. Some of the teachers suggested they did not always use the tasks at the end of the unit after teaching the grammar items because the tasks did not suit the interests and abilities of the students. Sometimes they had to modify the tasks before using them (Turn 112, AI2; Turn 43-48, DI1) or use supplementary materials (Turn 37-38, EI1; Turn 95-100, HI1). These ideas will be explored further in the section on teachers' perceptions of the teaching materials in section 6.7.2 of this chapter.

6.5.2 Teachers' concepts of general teaching effectiveness

Evidently, teaching effectiveness was a major concern for most of the teacher participants in this study, as is indicated by their similar responses to the open-ended questions at the beginning of each interview, when I asked them to comment on anything they found

special in the lesson. The teachers responded about something related to teaching effectiveness in 9 out of the 16 interviews. They also put forward various ideas and concerns about the issue in other parts of the interviews. As can be seen in Table 6.11, teachers' comments on general teaching effectiveness had the sixth highest weighting of all the major themes coded in the interviews. I did not make any special effort on elicited teachers' comments on this topic. Instead, the comments were mainly given voluntarily by the teachers.

The ideas teachers put forward in the interviews are mainly related to the following aspects of teaching effectiveness: whether the students have really learned what has been taught, whether they participated actively in the class activities and are interested and engaged in these. For the purpose of analysing the lesson and interview data in this study, teaching effectiveness is considered according to three basic criteria: acquisition (student learning), interaction and engagement. These cover aspects such as whether students have successfully learned what the teacher intended to teach, whether the class is interactive with a higher level of student production of the language, and whether the lesson successfully captures the attention of the students.

The quantitative data indicating the number of turns can perhaps indicate the level of interactivity in the lessons. With the exception of a few lessons (the lessons of Teacher F, H and one lesson of Teacher D), all the other lessons have over 100 turns (Table 6.9). They were supposed to be quite interactive in terms of student responses. However, it should be noted that a great deal of the interactions in the lessons were just pseudo interactions, as the student responses were elicited by the teachers (often by calling their names) and consisted mostly of repetitive drilling of grammatical forms. Although sometimes there were comparatively more meaningful uses of the structures, these were often heavily guided and involved little spontaneous and meaningful production of

language.

For acquisition and engagement, there is no quantitative data to rely on. In most of the classes, the teachers seemed to have successfully captured students' attention and kept them on task. Responses from students were mostly elicited by teachers and often the elicitations were to designated individual students, with the exception of the lessons of Teachers A and E who made use of familiar and interesting topics to engage students in activities like guessing games. In those lessons, voluntary responses were contributed by students, although language production by students was still short and limited.

To avoid imposing the etic perspective on this aspect of the analysis, it is perhaps useful to refer to the emic perspective of teachers' perceptions of teaching effectiveness from the interviews. Of the three aspects of teaching effectiveness (acquisition, interaction and engagement), the teachers seemed to be most concerned with engagement. A number of them expressed their views concerning the interest level of the lessons. In response to the first interview question about any special comments on the lesson, a few of the teachers responded by referring to interest and engagement, such as Teacher A.

Anything special? ... I think that lesson was an introduction. I believe that we need to give students more formal notes and rules. I ... think this lesson is an introduction – to arouse students' interest and give them some ideas. But today I didn't really focus on grammar. I just touched on it briefly. I want them to enjoy and be relaxed for a while, and then in the next lesson I'll give them the notes, and focus on a little more grammar and give them more practice.

(Turn 2, A11)

Here, the teacher made a distinction between student interest on the one hand, and formal notes, rules and practice on grammar on the other. Her idea of arousing interest was to use games and activities. A major strategy Teacher A used in this lesson was a guessing game

on something familiar to students' life. The activity was communicative rather than form-focused. It gave students opportunities to repeat using conditional sentences without making students feel that they were doing drilling for the grammatical structures. The teacher believed it would make the students "enjoy" and "feel relaxed", as she tried to explain why she had not given students "more formal notes and rules". Similar ideas on making use of familiar ideas to capture students' attention were also expressed in the interviews of Teacher H (Turn 25-28, H11).

Other teachers also expressed ideas about the need to use pictures or visual aids (such as presenting them on PowerPoint slides) to make the lessons more interesting (Turn 2, B11; Turn 76, B12; Turn 19-24, C11; Turn 67-70, C12; Turn 2, D11).

With respect to acquisition (student learning), more than one teacher expressed their concern about the teaching pace. When asked what comments she would like to make about anything special in the lesson at the beginning of Interview 2, Teacher C responded as follows: "Regarding the lesson just now, I think we could have proceeded in a faster pace. We could have done more." He believed that students had learned about similar grammatical structures in their primary schools (Turn 6-8, C11). Teacher D expressed similar ideas in her interview, as she commented that students "worked too slowly": "You can't teach much after spending the whole lesson. They had to spend five minutes just on these three sentences. And then they didn't follow instructions. I asked them to re-write the sentences but they created new sentences" (Turn 1-6, D12). Here Teacher D suggested that one reason for spending too much time was that students did not follow instructions. The idea that giving instructions to students for activities and tasks was time-consuming was reiterated by other teachers (Turn 80-84, B12), and supported by evidence from the lessons. As indicated in Tables 6.5 and 6.6, administrative/task instructions were the most heavily weighted type of teacher instruction in the majority of the lessons.

Some teachers also commented on the need to teach the same structures repeatedly and some students' failure to learn even after frequently repeated teaching (Turn 42-50, GI1).

Several teachers also made comments on student acquisition or performance in the interviews. Teacher F, whose lessons were the most form-focused and teacher-fronted, was most unequivocal about the impact of instruction on students' performance:

89 Researcher: Eh, you think if you explained the rules, students will learn them?

90 Teacher: Yes. They will think ... Ah ... Perhaps our students, they are quite ... conventional, perhaps because I teach quite conventionally. They think that if they know the rules, how to do things, they will have some satisfaction. Then they know how to do it. Next time when it comes up [in the exam], they know how to do it. That's OK. Also very often, they will use what they learn in writing. They can really use it. You can see that in their compositions they will use the items they have learned. Therefore, the compositions at the beginning and end of the semester are really different and you can see the improvement.

(Turn 89-90, FI1)

Teacher F believed that students could really acquire the structures somehow, as shown in their writing at the end of the semester. Interestingly, her idea that students could learn from grammar instruction was echoed by Teacher H, although the language level of her students was much lower. At least students believed that grammar instruction was useful to them, as students once told her that they very much appreciated the effort of a certain teacher who taught them about SVO (the basic sentence structure containing a subject, a verb and an object) (Turn 220, HI2). Another teacher, Teacher C, suggested the more aggressive students who were keen to learn English and gained better results in the

examinations tended to like grammar lessons better (Turn 200, CI2). Other teachers also expressed the view that students found grammar instruction useful for their examinations (Turn 293-300, AI2).

6.6 Overall view of teaching concepts and practice

As has been shown in Tables 6.5 to 6.10 and discussed before this section, there are both similarities and differences in the activities in the lessons of different teachers. In general, most of the lessons, except those of Teachers A and E, put more emphasis on teacher instruction compared to student practice and responses. There was also a varying amount of emphasis on these two main types of activities for different teachers.

Teachers also differed in the emphasis they put on different types of activities related to teacher instruction. While the majority of teachers spent most of the time giving administrative/activity instructions or explaining grammatical rules and conditions for using them, a smaller number focused more on explaining grammatical forms, or explaining vocabulary. There were also similarities and differences in the extent they used metalanguage.

There were also variations in the types of practice. While a great deal of emphasis was put on form-focused controlled practice, there was also a considerable amount of controlled practice which was meaning-focused. Some of the teachers used strategies like individual or whole-class reading. Only one or two of them used more spontaneous and meaningful practice. Non-whole class practice like individual written practice and group oral practice also show a similar tendency towards more controlled and mechanical drilling than spontaneous and meaningful production of the language.

Although the teachers had to face some limitations in their own teaching contexts, most of them asserted in the interviews that they could usually practise what they believed in, and there was not much restriction on the teaching approach they adopted. Comparisons of lesson and interview data show little contradiction between concepts and practice, although in some instances small discrepancies were probed and explained further in the interviews. In general, the teachers' concepts and views conveyed in the interviews were consistent with their teaching practice in the lessons and the concepts underlying it. The two sets of data from the lessons and interviews can be used to reinforce each other to form a more complete picture of each teacher's teaching concepts and practice.

Teaching approach and practice in both lessons were also mostly consistent for the majority of the teachers, with similar relative weightings for both teacher instruction and student practice/responses in both lessons, as can be seen in Tables 6.5 to 6.7. This consistency indicates that using a prescribed set of teaching materials did not significantly affect the teaching practice of most teachers.

In some of the lessons, there were small variations in the relative weightings of teacher instruction and student responses between the two lessons, such as for Teachers E, F, G and H. The relative weightings of teacher instruction compared to student responses were slightly higher in the second than in the first lesson for Teachers E, F and G, while for Teacher H, it was just the opposite. They were higher in the second than in the first lesson.

For some of the teachers, there were also some small differences between the relative weightings of the types of teacher instructions used in the two lessons. There were relatively more administrative instructions compared to explanation of grammatical rules and forms in the second lesson of Teacher D than in the first lesson; there was relatively more explanation of grammatical rules compared to explanation of grammatical forms in

the second lesson of Teacher E than in the first lesson; for Teacher G, there was relatively more explanation of vocabulary than administrative instructions and explanation of grammatical forms.

Similar differences applied to student responses, mostly in the relative weightings between “controlled practice focusing on meaning” and “controlled practice focusing on forms”. The relative weightings between the two changed places in the second lessons of Teachers A, C and E. Two of the teachers, Teachers B and D, used an activity in the second lesson that had not been used in the first, namely, “reading by individual students”.

These differences may be explained by the fact that they might have interacted differently with the provided materials used in the second lesson. Analysis of the lesson structures reveals some differences in the teaching strategies and activities used by the teachers in the second lesson when following the teaching materials.

Quite positive views on the provided materials were given by the teachers in the interviews. Most of the teachers suggested that the approach in the provided materials was not unfamiliar to them. They did not use the “production” activity in Part C mainly because of time constraints, and some teachers suggested that they would cover Part C in another lesson (e.g. Turn 15-22, FI2).

In short, the lesson observation and interview data are mostly consistent in indicating teachers’ concepts and practice. Putting them together can help to present a collective picture of possible strategies used to tackle grammar in TBLT by different teachers and the concepts and views underlying their practice.

6.7 Teachers' views on the grammar teaching environment

The findings in this section are collected from the interviews with the teachers. These consist of the teachers' views on or their knowledge of the teaching environment, in relation to various aspects, factors or limitations which may have an impact on the way they teach, such as curriculum ideas, teaching materials, second language teaching theories and educational or language teaching policies.

6.7.1. Curriculum ideas

Nearly all the teachers (except Teacher E) admitted that that they were not familiar with the curriculum ideas on teaching grammar. Most of the teachers maintained they did not feel they played a role in the development of curriculum ideas for their subject. They also commented that they did not even read or pay attention to the suggestions about grammar teaching in the curriculum documents. They also found that the seminars and workshops conducted by the EMB with the aim of supporting the implementation of the new curriculum were not too useful. Information on what the curriculum should be like was mainly gleaned from the teaching materials in the textbooks. These should have incorporated appropriate curriculum ideas in order to be offered a place on the recommended book list. Teachers could follow the textbook to teach according to the curriculum ideas.

Teachers also cited other sources for their grammar teaching approach and ideas. Teacher B suggested that he mainly gained ideas from his teaching experience, and his experience of being taught as a student when he was in primary and secondary school (Turn 133-136, B11; Turn 164, B12). Similar ideas were reflected in the interviews of more than one of the other teachers.

Teacher A also suggested that she gained ideas about TBLT mainly from her teacher training studies rather than directly from the curriculum documents or the EMB (Turn 236, A12). In fact, she was quite confused about the source of the exemplar materials for TBLT, and she was not sure whether they were published by the EMB or the institute where she received teaching training (Turn 236-242, A12).

Most of the teachers believed that their grammar teaching approach was mostly developed through their teaching experience. They also asserted that their teaching approaches had not changed much after the implementation of the task-based curriculum. In fact, just as Teacher C suggested, his major approach in teaching grammar has not changed much ever since he started teaching, although he learned from experience and kept refining his teaching method to make it work better (Turn 75-88, C11).

Teacher D queried the necessity of adhering to the general principles concerning TBLT stated in the curriculum documents, as qualified and experienced teachers had often internalised teaching ideas from various sources and were able to integrate suitable teaching strategies into different teaching situations (Turn 30-32, D11). Similar ideas were also expressed by Teacher E, who maintained that she did not remember coming across specific guidelines in the curriculum documents about grammar teaching, although she had studied the documents as a curriculum designer in her school. She believed that it was not possible to follow a rigid framework, as teaching was something integrated. Helping students to understand the grammatical rules, use them correctly and apply them in meaningful contexts takes time. Their abilities need to be developed gradually and each lesson can only focus on limited targets (Turn 32-36, E11).

Most of the teachers were quite dissatisfied with the way that curriculum ideas were

generated and developed. They believed that frontline teachers in general did not play a role in formulating ideas in the curriculum documents, and the EMB had not actively invited the contribution of the teaching profession (Turn 83-86, DI2). The following comment by Teacher B was perhaps quite representative of how most of the teacher felt in this respect: “A matter of time. And to a certain extent, things will stay the same even if you have said something. All right then, let the experts do it” (Turn 221, BI2).

Teachers were also dissatisfied with the way the curriculum ideas were disseminated through seminars and workshops conducted by the EMB. Most of them believed that these were not useful or they seldom attended them (Turn 216-221, AI2; Turn 153-164, BI2; Turn 71-72, EI1). A few of them had been to some of these. They believed some of the ideas may have contributed somehow to their long term process of professional development. However, how or whether the teacher can make use of them may very much depend on how they integrate them into their own teaching repertoire, which is probably developed from their teaching experience more than anything else (Turn 89-92, CII).

6.7.2 Teaching materials

The teachers offered profuse comments about the teaching materials, which seemed to be an area they were most enthusiastic to contribute ideas about. The total weighting for their comments on teaching materials is the second highest according to Table 6.11.

Nearly all the teachers commented that the grammar material in their textbooks was not sufficient, although their views on the general quality of their textbook varied. They had quite similar ideas on the attributes of good textbooks and teaching materials. They believed that the tasks and activities should be familiar, realistic and interesting to the

students, and that visual aids such as pictures and PowerPoint slides could enhance student interest (Turn 96, 174, B11; Turn 19-24, 28, C11).

Most of the teachers were using one of the two most popular task-based textbooks published by the same publisher. Both textbooks were designed and structured according to similar principles, although they were intended for students of different language levels – one for higher levels and the other for lower levels. Most of the teachers agreed that their textbook was quite good to use in general, although they endorsed their textbook to varying extents and had different ideas about how it could be improved.

Some of the teachers commented about the difficulty of producing high quality task-based textbooks. Teacher D, for example suggested that their textbook did not live up to the task-based criteria, as it was very hard to relate everything in the unit to the same theme, and connect the grammar and reading input to the tasks that students need to complete at the end of the unit.

... the book we are using follows the task-based approach. All the textbooks are supposed to be using the task-based approach. In fact, we use what is in the book, we follow the book to teach the grammar items. Our curriculum is the same. But can you say that it is very task-based? Eh, I think it may not always be related to teaching the previous passage for the whole task. They are probably ... But I hope to make things task-based, such as today we did something on helping the tourists, ... just that task on helping tourist, but not everything in the whole unit is related to completing a task. Sometimes you can't really achieve this. Even the books produced by the publishers may not achieve this I think. (Turn 22, D11)

Teacher E also made similar comments about the difficulty of connecting everything to the context and the tasks within a unit (Turn 44, E12). Trying to achieve this may restrict students' exposure if the task is not well-designed (Turn 48 and 54, E11): "... the task they designed perhaps require a lot of time to explain [to the students], and they bring out

very few [teaching] points. Sometimes they are not too clear, not too interesting.”

Other teachers also made similar comments about the difficulty of producing good quality material connecting input to output and the need to spend a large amount of time giving instructions about doing the task. (Turn 145-146, CI2). Other teachers expressed the view that some of the tasks do not really use authentic situations which are familiar and interesting to the students. They highlighted the need to modify or adapt these sometimes to suit their own classes.

Nearly all the teachers believed that the grammar materials in the textbook was insufficient. Most of them suggested that they needed to use supplementary grammar materials. In fact, one of the schools produced their own grammar book for all the classes at the same level (Turn 31-42, 51-54, 133-140, FI1). Other teachers used supplementary grammar books on the market. These were usually books with grammar explanations, exercises and drilling, usually decontextualised, such as the Grammar Books attached to the textbooks, or other books like *English Grammar in Use* and *Graded Exercises* (Turn 56, EI1; Turn 159-174, HI1). Teachers sometimes also produced their own materials according to the needs of their classes (Turn 193-196, BI1; Turn 56-58, EI2; Turn 163-172, GI1).

It should be noted that while some of the teachers supported a more task-based approach, most of them seemed to endorse the use of supplementary grammar materials which often offered discrete or decontextualised types of grammar exercises or drilling. While asserting that they supported the teaching of grammar as a kind of input to facilitate the completion of the tasks, they also endorsed grammar-based teaching as something quite separate from the major task-based approach. They seemed to have quite paradoxical views about teaching grammar within TBLT.

The teachers invariably gave positive feedback about the overall design of the materials provided for use in the second lessons, although some of them also made suggestions for further improvement. The materials featured both grammar-based and task-based elements, but were considered quite task-based by some of the teachers (Teachers B and G).

6.7.3 Influences and limitations on teaching

This section explores teachers' own perceptions of influences or factors that may impact on their teaching approach or teaching practice. In general, most of the teachers believed that they had autonomy in using methods they believed were effective. Although they perceived some constraints on the way they taught within the teaching environment they worked in, most of them believed that these did not seriously impact the way they taught, and most of the time they could make their own decisions about what they wanted to do. This general assertion of autonomy was most precisely expressed by Teacher B. "Honestly speaking, for teachers, if you close the door, you are the boss" (Turn 258, B11).

Most of the teachers believed that their own teaching experience was the most significant influence on the way they taught. Teachers B and F, for example, believed that they developed their own teaching approach through observing student responses or adjusting to student needs over the years as they gained more teaching experience (Turn 133-140, B11; Turn 39-40, F12)

In addition to teaching experience, other teachers emphasised the influence of their studies, such as their studies on English as a subject or on teaching English (Turn 73-76, E11). Such influences often worked in conjunction with their teaching experience in

shaping their teaching approach, as was expressed by Teacher D below:

I think just as what I have said just now, it is based on my experience, and also my years of studies on English, or on teaching English. After these years of studies and over ten years of teaching experience, you have developed your own direction: how to make things more interesting to the students, how to draw their attention, how to make things go more deeply into their minds, how to make things stay in their memory. I think these are what you explore through your experience. Because you also want to strive for improvement. If you teach better and better and they respond better in class, you will also have a greater sense of achievement. I think that mainly depends on your own experience and exploration. (Turn 34, D11)

Surprisingly, one of the teachers even emphasised that a major source of their grammar teaching ideas was their own experience as a student in primary and secondary school. He has always used a more grammar-focused approach in teaching, although he was supposed to be using the communicative approach. His grammar teaching practice had not changed much from the time he started teaching to the present, after teaching for over twenty years (Turn 75-82, C11).

Textbooks and grammar teaching materials also had an impact on how the teachers taught, and a few of them commented on this aspect. In particular, quite a few of them either claimed that they gained ideas from supplementary grammar books or made direct use of the materials in those books for teaching (Turn 37-44, F12; Turn 159-164, H11).

Although none of the teachers saw second language teaching theories and research as something which had greatly influenced their teaching approach, a few of them suggested that ideas or theories they gained from their studies may have gradually been internalised and integrated into their teaching approach, in conjunction with what they had learned from their teaching experience. Teacher D gave a detailed description about this.

For theories I think we have internalised them. You have been attending, eh ... so many classes about how to teach and you won't say now I am following this particular theory or that particular theory because you have learnt about various different theories. Then you will use ideas which are useful or give up ideas which are not useful. You have tailored made your own [teaching approach]. I think. ... I think we are not at a stage when you say I'll follow this theory, that theory. This is how you gained ideas when you were a student. Then, in practising the ideas as a teacher in the classroom, after you have taught many lessons, you will explore and find out, for example, what was not good enough last year, and this year you will try to improve. Just like now that we have a computer, so I have added some IT elements. We have done this because we think it is useful. If it is not useful, we won't try to do it unnecessarily. So if you see that everyone is using PowerPoint but you think that it is only a kind of gimmick but not something useful, then you won't be keen to do it. You may only do it once or twice to arouse their [students'] interest. (Turn 36, D11)

Teacher D also mentioned that all these ideas from her experience and studies were integrated into her practice, allowing her to make appropriate adjustments to suit student needs.

I have said that you have studied educational approaches, you have studied a lot of theories, but now you have integrated them after so many years of experience, You can't say that it is from a certain source or particularly from whose theory. I think this is not important. What matters is how you make use of them. (Turn 44, D12)

This idea of the teacher exercising her professional judgment in making adjustments for different teaching situations to suit student needs based on her knowledge and experience was reiterated in the interviews with other teachers (Turn 129-138, 159-166, C12; Turn 73-76, E11).

The teachers also referred to a number of factors that could act as restrictions or limitations on the way they taught. One of these was the requirements of public or school examinations. In most of the schools, school exams were still quite grammar-based, with

questions mostly on discrete grammar items. The upcoming change in the public exams curriculum, with more emphasis on using grammar in a contextualised way (e.g. HKCEE and school-based assessment) may, they said, have implications for grammar teaching methods (Turn 95-99, A11; Turn 140-148, A12; Turn 23-30, B11; Turn 16-18, B12; Turn 95-102, Turn 119-122, E12).

Another factor was the lack of time and the heavy workload. Teachers commented that they could not do everything they would like to do because of the time constraints (Turn 173, A11; Turn 43-48, 85-90, 93-94, B11; Turn 80-84, B12).

Low student ability and a wide range of student ability also made it hard for them to teach and restricted the teaching methods they could use (Turn 8, 196, B11; Turn 8-18, B12; Turn 29-42, H11; Turn 1-10, 37-56, H12).

Class size was another problem they had to face, as some of them believed that it was hard to practise the task-based approach with large classes of over 40 students (Turn 64-66, B12; Turn 75-80, D11).

6.8 Chapter summary

This chapter analyses the findings from the lesson observations and interviews of the empirical study. Teachers' concepts and practice seem to be quite consistent based on the lesson observations and interviews. Data from both sources are aligned and contribute to a coherent collective picture of teachers' concepts, views and practice related to grammar teaching.

Results from the empirical study indicate that grammar teaching still plays an important role in secondary English Language classrooms, although individual teachers seem to have quite paradoxical views about the relationship between grammar and TBLT. They also apply different degrees of emphasis to more form-focused or meaning-focused instruction. The lessons show different levels of presentation, practice and production, as the teachers cope with the sometimes conflicting demands of grammar teaching and TBLT. The following are the major teaching concepts or features of teaching practice as observed in the lessons and the interviews:

1. Grammatical terms were used, but mostly basic and familiar ones were repeated in the same lesson.
2. Grammatical terms were explained, but quite infrequently and the explanations were often quite simple and general.
3. While some of the teachers gave quite detailed explanations of grammatical rules, uses or forms, others put less emphasis on grammatical explanations.
4. Student practice/responses looked mostly like drilling.
5. There was little authentic and spontaneous production of language by the students
6. Most of the teachers who followed the textbook taught grammar in the pre-task input stage. However, sometimes it was not so clear what stage they were in the task cycle, as some of them taught grammar separate from TBLT, and they might not use the tasks in the textbook.
7. Although most of the teachers believed that grammar teaching was important, they seemed to have quite ambiguous or paradoxical views about TBLT or teaching grammar in TBLT.

In the post-lesson interviews, the teachers also expressed their views on the constraints and limitations they had to face in the teaching environment:

1. Teachers had to cope with a tight teaching schedule and heavy workloads.
2. Large class size, low ability of students or a wide range of abilities were obstacles to effective task-based teaching and grammar teaching.
3. Teachers needed more support, such as high quality task-based teaching materials
4. with sufficient attention to grammar and supplementary grammar teaching materials.
5. There seemed to be conflicting demands on grammar teaching related to curricular
6. guidance, assessments and other educational reform initiatives or policies.

In the next chapter, these views and concepts will be discussed in a wider context, in connection with the analysis of the English Language curriculum and teaching materials in the previous chapters, especially in Chapter 4.

Chapter 7 Discussion on curriculum, materials and teaching practice

7.1 Introduction

The detailed analysis of the data from the empirical study in Chapter 6 has given a picture of how grammar was perceived and practised by individual teachers. There were both similarities and differences in their teaching concepts and practice which can be explored further to achieve a more comprehensive interpretation.

This chapter discusses further how these ideas are relevant to the relationship between grammar teaching and TBLT, in connection with the wider teaching and learning context under the first two areas that this thesis sets out to investigate: the language teaching curriculum and policies in Hong Kong and the language and grammar teaching materials used in the local context. Major ideas from the literature review and materials analysis from Chapters 2 to 4 are extracted to form a basis for further interpreting the data from Chapter 6, in order to gain a comprehensive picture of concepts and practices concerning grammar teaching in Hong Kong secondary schools.

A framework of pedagogy for the task-based curriculum is proposed at the end of the chapter to bring together various ideas related to the curriculum implementation of grammar teaching in the local context.

7.2 Grammar in the language curriculum

7.2.1 The secondary English Language curriculum of Hong Kong

The 1985 communicative syllabus for the secondary English curriculum gave way to the

task-based curriculum in 1999, in which learning tasks were upheld as the major principle of curriculum organisation. In 2002, all secondary schools were required to change to task-based textbooks on the EMB recommended book list. This officially established the position of the task-based curriculum in secondary schools.

The task-based curriculum was implemented alongside the major educational reforms in the early 2000's, as described in the EMB educational reform blueprint *Learning to Learn: The Way Forward in Educational Development* (Curriculum Development Council, 2001). The document encompasses various educational ideals for developing students' various abilities, such as life-long learning and whole-person development. Some of these ideas are incorporated into the *Curriculum Guide for English Language Education*, in the form of various non-language outcomes students are expected to achieve.

While having features of the task-based syllabus in using tasks as the major principle of curriculum organisation, and encompassing features of different types of curriculum spanning the various dimensions of knowledge, experience and interpersonal (non-language outcomes), the secondary English curriculum is also specific in its classification of language skills and knowledge and in its description of learning outcomes. Although the task-based approach presumes more holistic competencies in communication, the new curriculum does not depart from the past practice of describing separate competencies in the four language skills (i.e. speaking, listening, reading and writing), and it still includes a list of grammatical structures to be learned, although no sequential order is specified (Curriculum Development Council, 1999). In short, the curriculum demonstrates various features of inclusiveness and specificity. As was argued in section 4.3.2, it looks like a non-integrated set of elements haphazardly put together, indicating various possibilities without sufficient details for practical applications.

This non-integrated nature of the curriculum is further aggravated by the different rationale underlining the public examination that students need to take at the end of their secondary studies. As described in Chapter 4, the existing public examination seems to be a complete departure from the task-based language curriculum. Although there have been plans to reform the exam systems, such as the introduction of the school-based assessment, there are still conflicting elements that may confuse the teachers about their role in helping students to achieve the expected outcomes.

7.2.2 Grammar in the task-based curriculum

As has been discussed in Chapter 4, recent ELT curriculum design can be put under two broad categories: Type A and Type B syllabuses. As described by White (1988), while Type A syllabuses emphasise the subject to be learned, Type B syllabuses emphasise the process of learning. These two types can be summarised in terms of the distinction between an interventionist approach which gives priority to the pre-specification of linguistic or other content or skills objectives on the one hand, and a non-interventionist, experiential, “natural growth” approach on the other, which aims to immerse the learners in real-life communication without any artificial pre-selection or arrangement of items (Allen, 1984, as cited in White, 1988).

With its emphasis on communication and the accomplishments of tasks, TBLT is more oriented towards a Type B design with a focus on the process of learning. Therefore the teaching methodology has a great impact on the teaching content. The task-based secondary English curriculum contains elements of both the Type A and Type B syllabuses. While specifying language functions to cover and learning outcomes to accomplish for the four skill areas, the *English Language Syllabus* also provides general guidelines about teaching approaches and activities. How these can actually be

implemented in teaching practice is subject to the interpretation and teaching approaches of different teachers.

Grammar teaching has been described quite specifically in the 1999 *English Language Syllabus* and the *Curriculum Guide for English Language Education* (Curriculum Development Council, 1999, 2002), which has been discussed in detail in Chapter 4. It is clear from these ideas that grammar should be taught in a way permissible within the task-based curriculum. This idea that grammar is subordinate to task-based teaching is explicitly expressed elsewhere in the Syllabus, where it is described as “a means to an end.” This relegation of grammar to a subordinate position somehow reconciles the conflicting forces of form and meaning involved in teaching grammar within TBLT and makes them more compatible. It widens the scope of what is permissible for accommodating grammar at various stages of teaching, ideally using a variety of teaching methods and activities.

7.2.3 Role of grammar in the language curriculum of individual schools

The interview data show that the teacher participants' schools had all followed the instructions of the EMB to change to task-based textbooks in order to implement the task-based approach by 2002. The task-based textbooks used in secondary schools were quite uniform in style, since there were two sets of the most commonly used textbooks published by the same publisher. They mainly used modules, units and tasks as the underlying principle for organising the curriculum (Curriculum Development Council, 1999). The tasks were the targets to be accomplished at the end of each unit. The other teaching materials and activities in the unit all revolved around a main theme and contributed to the tasks. Grammar teaching usually occurred at the pre-task stage, giving input to the students to facilitate the accomplishment of tasks.

The connection between the curriculum and the mode of assessment is another important factor which impacts on how grammar is implemented within the curriculum. Although schools were required to change to the task-based curriculum in 2002, corresponding changes in the assessment system seem to have lagged behind, as the public examination students need to take at the end of their secondary studies, the HKCEE, remains similar to what it was like before the task-based approach was implemented. Therefore some of the teacher participants' schools still put emphasis on testing students on the use and knowledge of discrete grammar items, in the form of what the teachers called G. E (General English) test/exam papers. Some of them were still tackling grammar separately from the other skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking.

The interview data show that schools differed in the degree to which they followed the textbook in planning their teaching curriculum. Some of the schools, such as the school of Teacher H, tested students according to separate skills, such as reading, writing, listening, speaking, plus G. E. (General English). The G. E. paper was particularly intended for testing grammar (Teacher H). This school exam system was in fact not very different from what had been in place for a long time before the implementation of the task-based approach, and to some extent it seemed to contradict the principle of integrating skills to facilitate communication under the communicative and the task-based approaches, as the curriculum was still organised around separate skills in some of the schools. This idea of teaching the separate skills was also reflected in the interviews with the other teachers (e.g. Teacher D). The attempt to reconcile the conventional and task-based organisation of the curriculum results in curricula with features of both.

Although quite a few of the teachers suggested that they mainly followed the task-based textbook in teaching, they also maintained that they had to follow a teaching schedule, usually referred to as a "scheme of work", which was a commonly agreed on schedule for

teachers in their school teaching at the same level (Teachers C, E and G). For the scheme of work they could collaboratively decide what to cover in the textbook, and how to modify some material in it to suit their students (Teacher E). In addition to this, they also had the liberty to make further adjustments according to the needs of their own classes (Teachers C and G).

Teacher B commented that they covered units differently, including more content for some of the units when they implemented a “long schedule”, while omitting some materials when they implemented a “short schedule”. In their school, grammar was an important component for the quizzes they administered after completing each unit for their own school-based continuous assessment.

The curricula implemented in individual schools resemble a plethora of conventional and task-based elements. As the schools and teachers tried to come to terms with the new curriculum, they found various ways of accommodating their needs and approaches as well as adhering to the guidelines concerning grammar teaching in the curriculum.

As suggested by some of the teachers in the interviews, the prospect of change in the public exams curriculum, with more emphasis on using grammar in a more contextualised way (e.g. changes in the HKCEE and the introduction of school-based assessment) may have implications for grammar teaching methods (Teachers A, D and E). This move away from form towards the communication of meaning seems to be in line with the task-based approach, but for the teachers this involves further adjustments in the way they teach grammar within TBLT, and this may confuse them further regarding the place of grammar in the curriculum.

7.3 Grammar in the teaching materials

Given Hong Kong secondary school teachers' heavy workload, their teaching approach is often textbook-driven, that is, they often follow the organisation, approach or design of the textbook in planning and practising teaching. In fact, this tendency has been expressed by more than one of the teachers in the interviews (Teachers D and G). The EMB's directives to schools to change to task-based textbooks which were on the official recommended book list by 2002 further reinforced this textbook-oriented approach for implementing changes in the curriculum.

7.3.1 Textbook interpretation of curriculum ideas on grammar teaching

This section discusses the textbook interpretation of curriculum ideas concerning grammar teaching (Curriculum Development Council, 1999, 2002) by bringing together ideas from the analysis of textbook materials in section 4.4 of Chapter 4, and the teachers' views towards textbook materials described in section 6.7.2 of Chapter 6.

In section 4.4 of Chapter 4, one of the units in the textbook, *Longman Express 1A* (2004), was analysed in detail. The analysis showed that the textbook generally adheres to the four main curriculum ideas on grammar teaching presented in section 4.3.2B. Clearly, in the textbook material, grammar is intended to be taught in context (Idea a). It is intended to be a means to an end rather than to be taught as a system of rules or a stand-alone body of knowledge (Idea b). To some extent, the textbook material also shows that a variety of grammar teaching methods can be used (Idea c). There are different types of materials for grammar presentation, practice and production which spread across different parts of the book. There is the "Language focus" section with the presentation of grammatical rules and forms. It is followed by the "Language practice and language roundup" sections

which provide different types of guided or objective practice such as cloze or sentence writing exercises in various contexts. The tasks at the end of the units can provide opportunities to produce the structures in a more authentic and contextualised way.

The idea that grammar teaching can take place at different stages of task-based teaching and learning (Idea d) is partially fulfilled in the material. The textbook units are organised in a way that grammar functions mostly as input in the pre-task stage to scaffold students' ability to make use of the structures in the final production stage of task completion. There is also some material for guided practice which can be used during a task. There is, however, no indication of how grammar teaching is supposed to occur after a task, as there is no further material after the tasks.

The way that grammar is presented in the textbook indicates that the task-based approach underlying it is a weak form rather than a strong form, based on Skehan's (1996) description, as an attempt is made to incorporate form-focused activities in a task-based curriculum. Although including quite authentic, meaningful tasks at the end of the unit, the textbook material allows a variety of decontextualised form-focused activities in the input stage to facilitate the completion of the tasks. Because of the inherent incompatibility of form-focused teaching with task-based teaching, it is perhaps easier to incorporate curriculum ideas on grammar teaching in the pre-task input stage, as this type of form-focused activity can be more easily implemented in the task-based teaching and learning process.

As discussed in Chapter 6, the teacher participants in the empirical study gave extensive comments on the materials in their textbooks. Their practice in the observed lessons and the views they gave in the interviews conveyed their perceptions of the grammar teaching approach underlying the textbooks. None of the teacher participants disputed the idea that

grammar should be taught in context, and that the teaching of grammar serves as a means to effective communication resulting in the accomplishment of meaningful tasks at the end of the communication process. However, some of the teachers expressed concern about the difficulty of living up to task-based ideals in materials design, as it is very hard to relate everything in the unit to the same theme, and connect the grammar and reading input to the tasks that students need to complete at the end of the unit (Teacher D and E). Teacher E even suggested that trying to accomplish the difficult task of relating different aspects may result in restrictions in the teaching content and language exposure for the students. Other teachers also expressed the view that some of the tasks do not really use authentic situations from students' life that are familiar and interesting to them. They expressed the need to modify or adapt these sometimes to suit their students.

7.3.2 Supplementary grammar materials

As has been shown in Chapter 6, nearly all the teachers believed that the grammar materials in the textbook were insufficient. Most of them stated that they needed to use supplementary grammar materials. In fact, one of the schools produced their own grammar book for all the classes in the same level (Turn 31-42, 51-54, 133-140, FI1). Other teachers used supplementary grammar books on the market, or they produced their own materials sometimes according to the needs of their classes (Turn 195, BI1; Turn 53-60, EI2; Turn 163-172, GI1; Turn 159-174, HI1).

It should be noted that while some of the teachers supported a more task-based approach, they invariably endorsed the use of supplementary grammar materials which often offer discrete or decontextualised grammar exercises or drilling, such as those analysed in the Hong Kong grammar books survey in section 4.5 of Chapter 4. They considered grammar-based teaching as something which could be quite separate from the other

task-based activities. The grammar teaching materials they favoured were often more connected to the presentation and practice of grammatical structures.

In fact, supplementary grammar materials are probably also useful because of the difficulty of producing well-designed and high quality task-based teaching materials, which can make targeted structures task-essential, while at the same time using contexts which are interesting and familiar to the students, and exposing them to rich vocabulary appropriate to their language levels.

The analysis of the supplementary grammar books for use in schools in section 4.5 of Chapter 4 has also shown that there is still an emphasis on explicit presentation of grammar rules, and repetitive and decontextualised practice. However, there is also a clear influence of the communicative and task-based approaches, as shown in the tendency of these books to be slightly more contextualised, and more variegated and interesting in terms of presentation and activities. A small number of more contextualised grammar books have also appeared on the market in recent years and they have also become quite popular, as indicated by the large number of reprints. Compared to the SLA grammar books, the Hong Kong grammar books are generally more homogeneous and grammar-based. Some of them have also made an effort to attend to local needs, such as by including some Chinese translations of vocabulary, grammatical terms and explanations.

In short, the teaching materials, either from the textbook or supplementary sources, show that both the more conventional grammar-based and task-based strategies come into play in the new curriculum. Although most of the schools have made an effort to become more task-based, whether they endorse more grammar-based or task-based teaching and the respective type of teaching materials they use for their classes depends on the preferences

or policies of individual schools or teachers.

7.4 Grammar teaching in TBLT

Being positioned at the end of the curriculum implementation process, the frontline teachers play an important role in deciding how the task-based curriculum is enacted in the classrooms and how grammar is integrated within it. This decision also very much depends on the way they interpret, engage with and implement ideas from the curriculum documents and teaching materials. This section will discuss the ways individual teachers conceptualise and implement grammar teaching within the task-based curriculum, based on the lesson observation and interview data.

7.4.1 Presentation, practice and production

According to the lesson and interview data described in Chapter 6, most of the lessons contained elements of presentation and practice, according to the traditional PPP structure for grammar teaching. There was some slightly more meaningful production of the language by the students as well, but this was mostly quite heavily guided, with little spontaneous and meaningful uses of the language.

As can be seen in Table 6.5 in Chapter 6, most of the lessons were structured with activities related to both teacher instruction and student practice/responses. Teacher instruction often looks like the “presentation” section of the PPP structure, while student practice looks like the “practice” section. The teachers put different levels of emphasis on these two major types of activities. Most of the teachers seemed to have put more emphasis on teacher instruction, as the weightings for this were mostly higher than those for student practice/responses, with the exception of Teachers A and E, who seemed to

focus on student practice/responses more than the others. While Teacher F was lecturing in her class most of the time, some of the other teachers maintained a closer balance between teacher instruction and student practice/responses.

However, it would be unfair to give an overall conclusion that the lessons were structured like the presentation and practice sections of the PPP structure, as most of the lessons did not show a clear division line between these two types of activities. Instead, teacher instruction and student practice alternated with each other and occurred in different lengths. It can only be said that most of the lessons contained elements of presentation and practice, and the teachers put different levels of emphases on them.

A. Strategies for teacher instruction (Presentation)

As was described in Chapter 6 and shown in Table 6.6, there were five types of strategies for teacher instruction. These were administrative or task/activity instructions, explanation of grammar rules and uses, explanation of grammatical forms, explanation of vocabulary and explanation of grammatical terms, in order of importance.

Three important types of teacher instruction strategies are explanation of grammar rules and uses, explanation of grammatical forms, explanation of grammatical terms. They are the most central components of the “presentation” part of a conventional PPP grammar lesson.

In explaining the grammatical rules and uses, the teacher sometimes referred to the students’ previous knowledge about the grammatical structure or related grammatical structure(s) and then connected it with the structure targeted in the lesson (Teacher C). Sometimes they just explained the situations for using the structure, and then gave examples (Teacher B) by referring to real-life situations (Teacher E), or demonstrated the

meaning with an action (Teacher C).

In explaining grammatical forms, the focus was often on accuracy. The teachers often explained the use of inflections like -ed, -s, -ing at the end of the words (Teacher F). Sometimes they explained the restrictions for using the structures, such as the use of infinitives after modal verb “must” (Teacher H). Sometimes the teachers also emphasised the correct structure simply by repeating the forms while they were giving explanations.

Aside from the explanation of grammatical rules, uses and forms, some of the teachers also explained the grammatical terminology. Although this did not receive too much attention in most of the lessons, at least five of the eight teachers gave this type of explanation sometimes. Generally, the explanations were mostly short and simple, such as those for grammatical terms like “preposition”, “verb to be”, “base form”, “regular and irregular verbs”. Sometimes Chinese translations were used to explain grammatical terms. This was a strategy used sometimes by Teachers B and H. The teachers more frequently mentioned the grammatical terms in their lessons from time to time, but there were differences in the frequency of use and the types of grammatical terms used between lessons. The tendency to repeat the same grammatical terms was also stronger for some teachers compared to the others.

There are two more major types of teacher instruction which took up considerable time in the lessons, administrative instructions and explanation of vocabulary. While only some of teachers explained vocabulary quite frequently in their lessons, administrative instructions received a great deal of attention in most of the lessons. This was particularly evident in the lessons of Teacher A and Teacher E, who adopted a more task-based/activity-based and meaning-focused approach.

B. Types of student practice (Practice)

As has been described in Chapter 6, two types of controlled practice, either focusing on meaning and uses of structures, or focusing on forms, were given most emphasis in the lessons. Both types of activities, especially “controlled practice focusing on forms”, were quite similar to written grammar exercises aimed at drilling students on grammatical structures/usage. “Controlled practice focusing on meaning” was only a little more meaning focused, which means students needed to consider whether the words they gave were appropriate for the situation, instead of just focusing on the form only. Two more types of activities which were similar to drilling were “whole class choral reading” and “reading by individual students”, were used less frequently by most of the teachers. The most meaningful type of practice, “free/spontaneous and meaningful practice/responses” was used only once by Teacher E near the end of her second lesson. All these indicate that practice or responses from students were largely form-focused and repetitive, rather than spontaneous and meaningful.

Non-whole class activities like group/pair oral practice and individual written practice demonstrated a similar tendency. Individual written practice, which mostly consisted of form-focused exercises such as cloze, underlining, and guided sentence-writing, was used most often in the lessons. The more meaning-focused and task-based type of oral practice was used much less frequently.

The teachers’ classroom practice show different levels of PPP elements in task-based teaching. Although some teachers gave more meaning-focused practice to students compared to others, overall a significant amount of lesson time was spent on grammar explanations by the teacher and discrete exercises or drilling types of practice for students. The general teaching approach could be considered more grammar-based than task-based, especially in the second lesson in which teachers were asked to make use of a set of

provided grammar material. Most of the teachers omitted the production part of the material because of insufficient time and just used the presentation and practice sections. In the first lesson when teachers practised teaching grammar in their own ways, there was a greater range of grammar-based or task-based activities. While Teachers B and F focused mainly on completing some decontextualised grammar exercises with the students, others like Teachers A and E made use of communicative activities related to students' life to arouse their interest. Their purpose was to elicit student responses in practising the target structure repeatedly in more meaningful contexts. However, it was sometimes not clear what structures were targeted in the process of practising, as little explicit reference to grammar was given.

The coded data show that there were elements of presentation and practice in the lessons, although little production took place generally. There was often a lack of clear division between teacher instruction and student practice (in the form of teacher elicitation of student responses). Grammar teaching occurred either at the pre-task input stage, according to the design of textbook materials, or it was quite separate from the tasks.

7.4.2 The relationship between form and meaning

The discussion in the previous section examines the grammar presentation and practice activities in the lessons. This section will further discuss the relationship between grammar-based teaching and task-based teaching and show how form and meaning are interrelated and both play an important role in the teaching and learning of grammar within the task-based approach.

One type of teacher instruction shown in the lesson data bears special significance for the form-meaning contention, that is, the explanation of vocabulary. As indicated in Table

6.6, at some time in the lessons, six of the eight teachers explained words, expressions, or sentences. It was the second most important teacher instruction activity in the lessons of Teacher H. For teacher G, it was the most important teacher instruction activity for Lesson 2, although it received less emphasis in Lesson 1. Some lesson time was also spent on vocabulary explanation in the lessons of Teachers B, C, D and E.

Three of the teachers also commented on the role of vocabulary in grammar lessons or English lessons in the interviews. Teacher G, for example, stressed the importance of vocabulary for reading comprehension. Teacher H suggested the lack of vocabulary is more a barrier to the weaker students in using the language than the lack of grammar. Teacher E, who taught in a Band 1 school, believed that her students needed to be exposed to more vocabulary in conjunction with grammar. To do this, the structures can be connected to other expressions and the context can be widened instead of being restricted to a narrow theme. This is useful especially for more able students who are keen to learn more vocabulary.

This emphasis on the importance of vocabulary in the teaching and learning of grammar has resonated in recent discussions concerning pedagogical grammar, as grammarians and researchers have adopted a “functional” perspective of grammar teaching, in which the communication of meaning and use of context for teaching grammar receive more attention. A number of grammar theorists and researchers have been using the term “lexico-grammar”, to refer to grammar and vocabulary as a composite concept instead of separately. As suggested by Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999), there is an increasing tendency to conceive of grammar and lexicon as being on two opposing poles of one continuum in pedagogical grammar, rather than two totally dichotomous concepts. In grammar books, chunks of words with specific functions are often presented as

grammatical structures. It is sometimes hard to separate grammar and vocabulary as the two seem to merge. This close relationship between grammar and vocabulary has been explored in a number of studies (Jackson, 2002; Lewis, 1993; Willis, 2003).

The findings from the empirical study bear testimony to the close connection between grammar and vocabulary, as teachers and learners seem to consider both of them to be important for understanding and using language. If both of them have to be accounted for in designing the teaching strategies and processes, certainly they also need to be carefully incorporated in the teaching materials to facilitate effective learning.

7.4.3 General teaching effectiveness

Teaching effectiveness is a broad and inclusive concept that has been frequently referred to in second language teaching, involving various factors and participants in the teaching and learning process. Richards (1990), for example, refers to the concept of the Language Teaching Matrix as a metaphor for an interactive and multidimensional view of effective language teaching, which results from interactions among the curriculum, teachers, students, methodology, and instructional materials. Later on in the same book, he further focuses on teaching methodology and suggests that effective teaching strategies involve classroom management, structuring, tasks and grouping.

Richards' discussion of teaching effectiveness involves not only the teacher and the students as the two major participants of the teaching and learning process, but also the important role of contextual factors like the teaching curriculum and instructional materials. Researchers in SLA have often explored the issue of teaching effectiveness in relation to various aspects of language teaching. Some of them have explored the

professional role of the teachers, their teaching methodology, or the ways they implement specific teaching approaches in their classrooms (Richards, 2001; Richards & Nunan, 1990; Richards & Renandya, 2002).

Other studies explore teaching effectiveness in relation to successful learning or language acquisition. For example, the studies in sections 2.2 and 2.3 of Chapter 2 explore what kinds of form-focused instruction are effective for language acquisition (DeKeyser, 1995, 1997; Ellis, 1990; Long, 1983; VanPatten, 1990, 1993a, 1993b, 1996).

There have also been studies related to the teaching and learning context, such as the quality of teaching materials. A number of researchers have explored the design or evaluation of effective teaching materials, especially those produced for task-based teaching (McGrath, 1994; Richards & Renandya, 2002; Tomlinson, 1998; Weir & Roberts, 1994).

There seems to be disparate perceptions of what constitutes or facilitates teaching effectiveness, which results in a wide array of focuses and emphases in research, very often depending on the aims of the particular researcher. Underlying these efforts is the fact that teaching effectiveness has always been a major concern in second language teaching and learning, and SLA research has often been connected to it in some way.

As has been suggested in Chapter 6, for the purpose of analysing the lesson and interview data in this study, teaching effectiveness is considered according to three basic criteria: acquisition (student learning), interaction and engagement. These cover aspects such as whether students have really learned what the teacher intended to teach, whether the class was interactive with a high level of student production of the language, and whether the lesson successfully engaged the students.

As has been pointed out in Chapter 6, although there was no objective data to show whether students really acquired or learned what they were taught, some teachers gave their own perceptions of teaching effectiveness concerning student learning in the interviews. They expressed their concern regarding teaching pace, commenting that it took a great deal of time to teach very little, and that they had to spend too much time giving instructions about tasks or activities (Teachers C and D). Some teachers also commented on the need to teach the same structures repeatedly and students' failure to learn even after frequently repeated teaching (Teachers B and G).

Other teachers had more positive views on form-focused instruction and student performance. Teacher F believed that students really used the grammatical structures they learned in their writing, and Teacher H commented that students believed learning about the grammatical rules and structures was useful to them. Other teachers also commented that students believed that form-focused instruction could help them to perform better in the examinations.

These all show that at least some of the teachers believed that form-focused instruction had a positive impact on student learning (acquisition), or they believed that students had similar perceptions.

It was also shown in Chapter 6 that the quantitative data indicating the number of turns can perhaps indicate the level of interactivity in the lessons. The lessons looked quite interactive in terms of student responses, as indicated by the numerous turns in most of the lessons. However, it should be noted that a great deal of the interactions in the lessons were just pseudo interactions, as the student responses were elicited by the teachers (often by calling their names) and consisted mostly of repetitive drilling of grammatical forms.

They were often heavily guided and involved little spontaneous and meaningful production of language.

It can be concluded that that the lessons were in fact not very interactive, and involved little genuine, spontaneous and meaningful production of language in line with what is expected for the accomplishment of the tasks according to the task-based approach. However, it should be noted that production is based on language ability. Learning the grammatical structures does not immediately result in acquisition and automatic use of them in meaningful communication.

As discussed in Chapter 6, of the three aspects of acquisition, interaction and engagement, the teachers seemed to be most concerned with engagement. A number of them expressed their concern regarding the interest level of the lessons in the interview. They suggested that students' interest in the lessons could be enhanced by making use of familiar situations related to their life (Teachers A and E), or by using pictures and visual aids (Teachers B and C). These comments show that communicative rather than form-focused activities are more often favoured by students, according to the perceptions of the teachers. However, some teachers also suggested that the more aggressive students were sometimes more attentive when grammatical rules were taught explicitly, as they regarded grammar instruction as useful for their examinations (Teachers C and H). This can be explained in terms of different types of motivation. It seems that both meaning-focused and form-focused activities can engage students' attention, although the former is achieved through intrinsic motivation, as students are genuinely interested in the activities, while the latter is achieved through extrinsic motivation, as the activities are useful in helping them to achieve their learning goal.

In short, according to the teachers' perceptions, both form-focused and meaning-focused

activities play an important role in contributing to teaching effectiveness related to learning/acquisition, interaction and engagement. Their roles seem to be complementary to meet different needs at various stages of the teaching and learning process.

7.4.4 Overall view of grammar teaching in TBLT

Irrespective of whether they followed a more conventional or task-based curriculum, most of the teachers considered grammar to be an important component of the curriculum. Teaching grammar continued to play an important role in the English lessons. Some teachers held very strong views about the necessity of teaching grammar, as the only thing teachable in an otherwise non-content-based language curriculum (Teacher C): being useful knowledge that helps students to build up a foundation for using English (Teachers A and G).

Although most of the teachers believed that grammar was somehow contextualised and immersed in the task-based curriculum, some of them also suggested that grammar items could be singled out and taught separately (Teacher E). In fact, most of the teachers asserted that they used decontextualised grammar books to supplement the grammar material in the task-based textbooks (Teachers A, D, E). In some of the teachers' schools, they even produced their own grammar material of a similar nature (Teacher F).

Analysis of the class activities has shown that there were elements of presentation and practice in the lessons, with little production. Grammar teaching mostly occurred at the pre-task stage of the task cycle, or it was implemented separate from the tasks. Thus it can be concluded that the lessons were either grammar-based, or they involved more meaningful uses of the language without a clear focus on language forms. Form and meaning seemed to be quite separated instead of integrated. In the more grammar-based

lessons, the way in which grammar was taught in the lessons perhaps cannot be considered as task-based teaching of grammar, but rather a permissible way of teaching grammar within the task-based curriculum.

That the integration of grammar into task-based teaching was so weak can perhaps be explained by the different nature of grammar teaching and task-based teaching. TBLT is basically output-oriented (emphasising the production and use of grammatical structures), as the focus is on the ability of the students to complete tasks / perform outcomes at the end of the learning process. Grammar teaching, without further qualification, is fundamentally input-oriented (emphasising the analysis and understanding of grammatical structures). Although it has been suggested that a focus on form can be induced through output-oriented strategies or activities, it requires additional effort in structuring and directing the activities in order to achieve the purpose.

The heavily guided and non-spontaneous student practice indicates the presence of a wide gap between presentation and practice on the one hand, and production on the other. Presentation and practice do not naturally or automatically lead to production. Spontaneous production requires a lot of teacher scaffolding. The accomplishment of the tasks is not a natural outcome of student production. It is the result of intensive teacher input in supporting students' performance. This is also related to students' ability. A number of teachers have commented on students' low language levels or the wide range of student levels within the same class (Teachers B, G and H). This will probably have an impact on the type of practice the teacher can allow, and how much guidance he/she gives to the students.

When an approach focuses on the contribution of the students, as in the task-based approach, the teacher's work is actually heavier rather than lighter, as heavy

guidance/supervision needs to be given by the teacher to ensure that students are on task, and doing something relevant and useful to accomplish the teaching and learning target. Compared to the more teacher-fronted methods, the task-based approach is in fact more labour-intensive in terms of teacher instruction. That is perhaps why administrative/task instructions were so heavy in some of the more task-based lessons.

It should be noted that although most of the teachers could not cover the production section of the materials provided for the second lesson, quite a number of them asserted in the interview that they would do so in the coming lessons. They explained that they did not use the material not because it was not useful, but because it was not possible to cover all the three sections within a short period of around 35 to 40 minutes. In fact, most of them had quite positive views about the design of the materials and considered the provided materials appropriate for their students. Task-based teaching is time-consuming, and task-based teaching of grammar requires more time than grammar-based teaching. It may be hard to allocate so much time to focus on just one or two grammatical structures.

Aside from the design of the teaching materials and the individual teachers' approaches and strategies, there are also a few other important factors related to the teaching environment which may have an impact on how the intended curriculum was enacted in the classroom. The teachers referred to a number of factors which might restrict the way they taught. One factor was the lack of time and the heavy workload. Teachers commented that they could not do everything they wanted to do because of the time constraints (Teachers A and B). Low student ability and a wide range of student ability also made it hard for them to teach and restricted the teaching methods they could use (Teachers B and H). Class size was another problem they had to face, as some of them believed that it was hard to practise the task-based approach with large classes of over 40 students (Teachers B and D).

The task-based approach is a learner-focused approach which involves learners “in a mode of thinking and doing” (Curriculum Development Council, 1999). It is in fact a labour-intensive job for the teacher, as the students’ ability to think and accomplish tasks does not emerge automatically, but requires intensive teacher scaffolding and support, and ideally a great deal of attention to individual students. The three problems mentioned in the last paragraph: heavy workload, range of students’ ability and large class sizes are the common factors which prevent teachers from giving sufficient attention to individual students – a prerequisite for effective task-based teaching.

The most unexpected finding from this study is that although the study was conducted on teachers with a wide range of experience (from 3 to 24 years), and schools of different bandings (Bands 1 to 3), student abilities and levels (S1 to S3), there was something quite similar in the findings. Most of the classes did not seem to have successfully integrated the teaching of grammar into TBLT. Grammar seemed to have been taught as something quite separate from TBLT, or its connection to the tasks was not too clear. The findings from lesson observations indicated some kinds of variations in the types of teacher instruction, student practice and other class activities. However, there was also an obvious sense of homogeneity in the ways that grammar was taught in the lessons. Most of the lessons seemed to be more grammar-based than task-based, where activities were connected to teacher-fronted presentation and controlled student practice with few opportunities for spontaneous production of the language. When more meaning-focused or task-based activities were attempted, students were mainly given the opportunity to practise the forms repeatedly, and it was not obvious whether attention was drawn to these structures and whether they could really be used in the tasks.

As has been discussed in the literature review in Chapter 2, the inherent incompatibility

between grammar teaching and task-based teaching might have made the integration of the two so difficult. TBLT is also hard to be implemented in large classes like most of those in the study of 40 to 45 students, with insufficient teacher attention to individual students to support their language production. The lack of clarity in curricular guidance and the inadequacy of teaching materials in facilitating grammar teaching in a task-based context have also contributed to the paradoxical views and practices in implementing grammar teaching within TBLT. These inherent and external constraints have made the implementation of grammar teaching in TBLT a very challenging task in Hong Kong secondary schools.

7.5 The way ahead for grammar teaching: Framework of grammar pedagogy for the secondary task-based curriculum

Ideas, concepts and views collected from the materials analysis and empirical study contribute to a collective framework of grammar pedagogy for the secondary task-based curriculum to describe the implementation of curriculum ideas on grammar teaching and inform the practice of grammar teaching within TBLT. The framework is presented in Figure 7.1.

Figure 7.1 Framework of grammar pedagogy for the secondary task-based curriculum

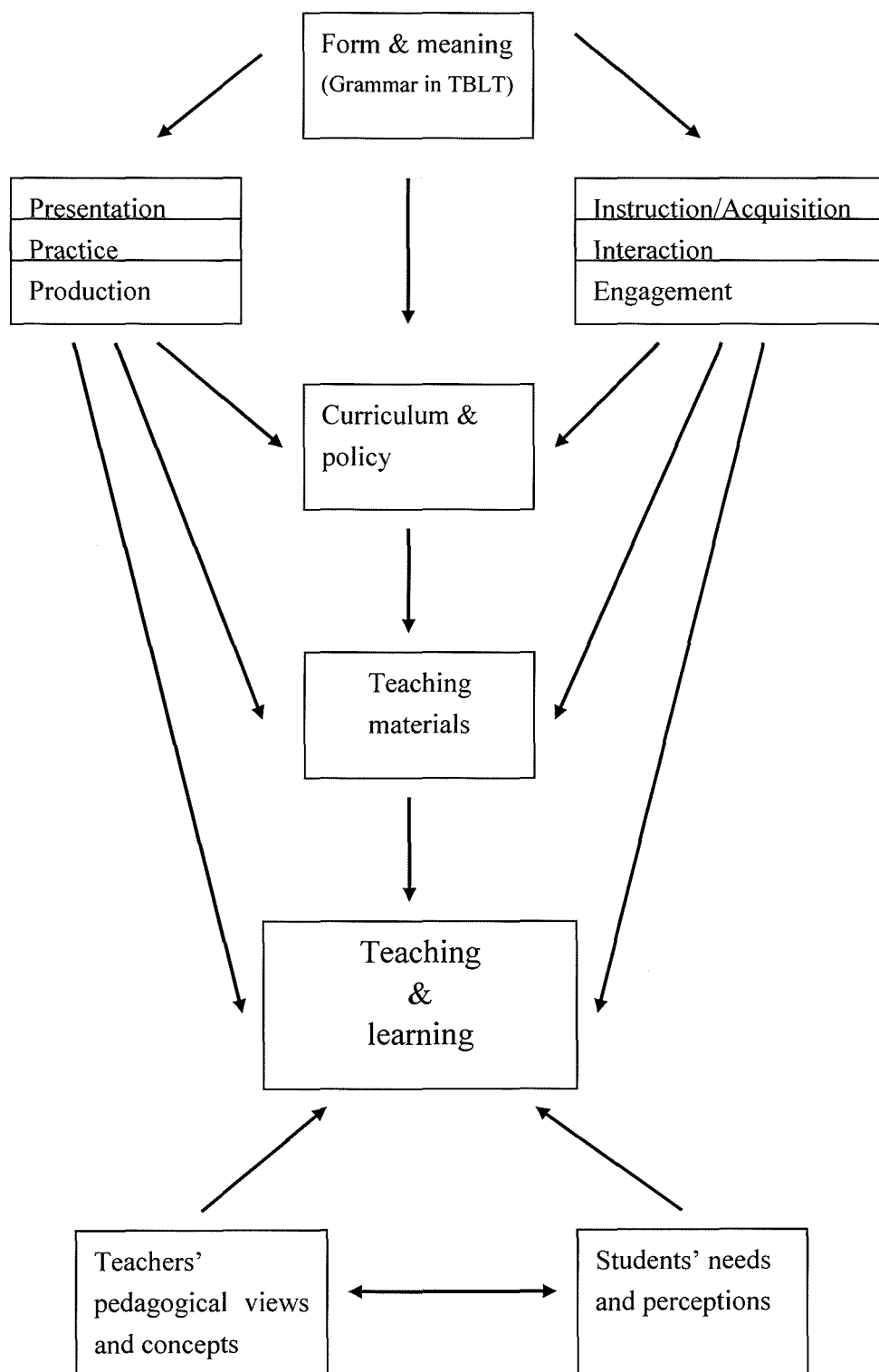


Figure 7.1 presents a framework of grammar pedagogy for the secondary task-based curriculum. It is the outcome of data analysis involving different levels of curriculum implementation, from the presentation of curriculum ideas in the curriculum documents to their transmission in teaching materials and their interpretation and implementation in teaching practice. As has been shown in the conceptual framework for analysing grammar teaching in the Hong Kong secondary curriculum in Figure 5.1 in Chapter 5, the data analyses in this study covers various aspects of the curriculum implementation process at different levels. The oval at the bottom of Figure 5.1 indicates that the findings of this study will contribute to the development of a framework for the Hong Kong secondary ELT curriculum to inform pedagogy in relation to curriculum implementation.

Figure 7.1 presents such a framework after discussing the findings. It shows the connection of the three major levels involved in curriculum implementation: the curriculum, the teaching materials and teaching and learning in the classroom. Alignment of the three is necessary to produce a complete process. Ideas in the curriculum are often inclusive and idealistic, as they aim to encompass various possibilities for accomplishing the targets. What actually happens to teachers and students in schools is often more restrictive. It depends on how the curriculum ideas have been transmitted from the curriculum documents and textbooks and interpreted by teachers, and how their interpretation moulds the concepts underlying their implementation of the teaching approach in their classroom.

As indicated at the top of the diagram, the integration of grammar in TBLT and the relationship between form and meaning is the main focus of pedagogy. The data show that grammar teaching within TBLT is closely linked to grammar pedagogy in general, and it contains different amounts of presentation, practice and production for different teachers. It is not useful to adhere to a rigid structure of presentation, practice and

production. Instead, adjustments can be made to the order of the three types of activities and the proportion of each type in the lessons. Grammar teaching and task-based teaching cannot be separated from the considerations of general teaching effectiveness in instruction/acquisition, interaction and engagement. The three major aspects of grammar teaching (form-focused instruction), task-based teaching (meaning-focused teaching) and general teaching effectiveness need to be considered at various levels of curriculum and materials design, in addition to teaching and learning.

At the bottom of the diagram are the two key components of the teaching and learning process: the teachers and the students. Teachers' and pedagogical views and concepts play an important role in shaping the teaching and learning process, as do students' needs and perceptions of their own learning experience. The data from the study have shown that what influences teaching most is neither the curriculum and policy directives, nor second language teaching theory and research, but individual teachers' perceptions of what needs to be done, based on their own consolidation of various needs, requirements and restrictions in their teaching practice. Students' needs and perceptions are also a major consideration for the teachers. When objective and comprehensive data on this issue are not available, teachers will try to formulate a picture concerning this based on their own perceptions.

7.6 Chapter summary

This chapter further discusses the implications of the data initially analysed in Chapter 6, concerning the teaching of grammar in relation to the task-based curriculum, the teaching materials, as well as teachers' views and practices. Factors at various levels of curriculum implementation and enactment are examined and discussed in order to propose a framework of grammar pedagogy for the secondary task-based curriculum, as presented

in Figure 7.1, which takes into consideration various factors that may have an impact on curriculum implementation in relation to teaching and learning. More detailed recommendations based on this framework concerning curriculum implementation and grammar pedagogy are presented in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

8.1 Summary of research

This study investigated grammar teaching concepts and practice in the Hong Kong secondary task-based English curriculum through literature reviews, materials analysis and empirical study. It began by examining the ideas in the intended curriculum. Then it explored how these ideas are transmitted to teaching materials and interpreted by individual teachers, and finally implemented in teaching practice. Findings reveal paradoxes and tensions at different levels of curriculum implementation of grammar teaching in TBLT which may inform pedagogy, policy and research.

Below is a summary of the major findings from the study:

8.1.1 Grammar in the language curriculum

Analysis of the curriculum documents shows that curricular guidance on grammar teaching in TBLT was fuzzy and inclusive without specific details concerning practical applications. Only the most easily operationalised curriculum ideas were actually transmitted to teaching materials and implemented in actual teaching situations. That is probably why pre-task language input was often used rather than other form-focused activities which may occur at the other stages of TBLT.

There was also a lack of alignment between the English language curriculum and educational policies and reforms, such as the examination and assessment systems. That created uncertainty and conflicting demands as teachers tried to conceptualise a complete picture of what students were supposed to achieve ultimately.

The transmission of curriculum ideas was mainly through the medium of recommended textbooks, instead of various means of curriculum dissemination involving teacher participation. There was also little teacher participation in the process of curriculum development.

8.1.2 Grammar in the teaching materials

Both the teachers' comments and the analysis of the teaching materials indicate that it was hard to realise curriculum ideals of grammar teaching and task-based teaching in the textbook materials in making everything contextualised under one theme within a unit, closely connected to students' daily life and integrated with interesting form-focused activities. Grammar materials in the textbooks were generally considered as insufficient and teachers often had to use supplementary grammar materials.

The supplementary grammar materials in Hong Kong showed evidence of the influence of the task-based approach, but they were generally more grammar-based and homogeneous compared to the general SLA grammar materials.

8.1.3 Grammar teaching in TBLT

Results from the empirical study indicate that teachers' concepts and practice seemed to be quite consistent across the lessons observed and the interviews conducted. Grammar teaching was still considered by teachers as important in the secondary task-based English Language curriculum, although individual teachers put different degrees of emphasis on form-focused or meaning-focused instruction in tackling the conflicting demands of grammar teaching and TBLT

In general, grammar did not seem to have been well-integrated into the task-based activities in most of the classes. Teachers mostly followed the textbooks in teaching grammar at the pre-task stage of the task cycle, or grammar was taught as something quite separate from TBLT. When teachers tried to draw attention to form, they also seemed to be rather confined to explanation and controlled practice, with little use of activities which required students to produce the language more spontaneously. Student language production in the classroom mainly looked like repetitive drilling. Constraints in Hong Kong classrooms like large classes and wide ranges of student abilities may have made the implementation of TBLT a great challenge, and it is more so if teachers have to tackle the additional demand of focusing on form, which is inherently incompatible with the rationale of the task-based approach.

8.2 Significance of research results

As has been discussed in Chapter 1, grammar teaching has often been a major concern in Hong Kong, and has always received a great deal of attention in policy and society. It has undergone changes regarding the level of emphasis it receives in response to changes in teaching approaches endorsed in the language curriculum. A number of past studies in SLA or in Hong Kong have been conducted on how grammar can be taught and whether grammar teaching is useful, and also on the implementation of the task-based approach or the task-based curriculum, teachers' beliefs and teaching practice. However, grammar teaching and TBLT have often been investigated separately. In the small number of studies investigating grammar teaching within TBLT, the focus has mainly been on individual teachers' views and practice. There has been little attempt to bring curriculum, teaching materials and teaching practice together as has been attempted in this study. This investigation of the transmission of curriculum ideas from curriculum documents to

teaching materials and classroom practice has given a more comprehensive context for exploring the various factors which may have an impact on the issues being examined. Taking all these into consideration helps to piece together a more comprehensive framework for informing grammar teaching pedagogy within TBLT.

This study combines concepts and practice in investigating teaching and learning. The exploration of the teachers' concepts and practice in the lessons is reinforced by views expressed in the interviews. They are also compared to concepts underlying ideas in the curriculum documents and teaching materials. Research methodology for the investigation of the subjective perceptions of the participants in the teaching and learning process is potentially fruitful for yielding useful data, if these perceptions are well grounded in the wider educational contexts.

Effective pedagogy in teaching grammar has often been measured by more objective tools such as test scores, or other types of statistical data to measure student performance, or production of language. Results from these studies often vary from one study to another, leading to inclusive results in some areas of investigation. This study tries to construct a cohesive picture of effective grammar teaching, making use of subjective concepts and perceptions of the teachers in relation to their teaching practice, grounded in the examination of various contextual factors which may impact on teaching and learning. In fact, the qualitative nature of teaching and learning often renders objective measurements ineffectual. It is the perceptions of the key participants involved in the process of teaching and learning which can most usefully reflect the effectiveness and suitability of pedagogy. Ideally teachers' perceptions can be combined with students' perceptions to form a complete picture. In fact, the subjective perceptions of teachers and students may have a greater impact on what actually occurs in teaching and learning than the objective contexts. Teaching practice is often concept-driven. As has been evident

from the data analysed in this study, the greatest influence on teaching practice seems to be the teachers' perceptions of what is effective in teaching and what can suit the needs of their students. This is something which involves long-term engagement and reflections on their work rather than adherence to haphazard goals imposed on them by policy or curriculum directives.

8.3. Limitations of approach

This study tries to involve various levels of curriculum implementation to contextualise the investigation of grammar pedagogy. However, the empirical study is quite small-scale, involving only eight teachers. The results cannot be generalised to represent what applies to all the secondary schools in Hong Kong. Because of the heavy workload faced by the teachers, it has also been difficult to conduct more than two lesson observations and interviews. Although I have tried to monitor and structure the data collection process to ensure effective use of data collection time, more lesson observations and interviews may give a more complete picture of how teachers perceive and practise grammar teaching in the task-based curriculum. Single periods of around 40 minutes may also be too short to show a full picture of the connection of different types of activities involving presentation, practice and production. In fact, some of the teachers expressed regrets about not having time to use the more task-based production activity in the materials provided for the second lesson. They suggested they would make use of the materials in another lesson.

This study focuses on the investigation of concepts and perceptions involving different levels of curriculum implementation: from curriculum ideas to teaching materials to teaching and learning. One important component has been missing in the complete process, that is, the students' role. Inclusion of students' perceptions and views would make this type of investigation more complete. This target of investigation has not been

included here as it would certainly complicate the research design and call for adjustments in the research methodology and means of data collection and analysis. Other studies which focus on students' perceptions and views concerning grammar teaching would certainly make the picture more complete.

8.4 Implications of results

8.4.1 Pedagogy

This study investigates grammar teaching concepts and practice at different levels of the implementation of the task-based secondary curriculum, using a variety of research instruments such as literature review, materials analysis and empirical study. Analysis of the data show the benefits of contextualising the investigation of teaching practice in wider educational contexts so as to provide a comprehensive picture of how grammar can be taught in the task-based curriculum, taking into consideration the relationships between form-focused instruction, meaning-focused instruction and other factors related to teaching effectiveness.

The study addresses the major issue of the complementary relationship of form, meaning and use in recent SLA research. The findings are useful for informing current grammar pedagogy concerning how form-focused instruction can be integrated into the primarily meaning-focused task-based approach. They show that the teacher participants put different emphases on form-focused and meaning-focused activities, which seemed to suit the needs of their particular classes. As shown in the classroom observation data, different amounts of instruction or practice related to the traditional presentation-practice-production can be used flexibly in the lesson according to specific student needs, based on the teachers' perceptions of what is effective to facilitate learning, interaction

and engagement. The teaching of grammatical structures can also be connected to the teaching of vocabulary. There can be more emphasis on lexico-grammar, an approach which attends to both structures and vocabulary simultaneously.

The findings have shown that only a small part of the strategies and activities that are suggested in the curriculum documents were actually implemented in the teaching practice of the teacher participants. Most of the teachers focused on the pre-task stage for teaching grammar as input to support language production later. The materials in the textbooks were also designed mostly according to this structure. In fact, a wider variety of strategies to draw attention to form can be useful at different stages of task-based teaching, instead of confining to the pre-task input. For example, post-task form-focused activities like feedback and error correction can be used to consolidate students' grammatical knowledge and their ability to use the grammatical structures properly.

To resolve the conflicting demands of task-based teaching and grammar teaching, a distinction can be made between task-based teaching of grammar teaching and teaching grammar in TBLT. The former makes grammar the focus of instruction, which contradicts the basic task-based rationale of emphasising the production and use of language. The latter allows different levels of grammar-based and task-based activities which are permissible within TBLT and easier to implement within the constraints of Hong Kong classrooms, as a wide variety of different strategies can be used.

The use of different form-focused strategies and activities needs to be supported by the production of effective teaching materials. Teaching is very much textbook-directed and published teaching materials play an important role in secondary schools, particularly due to the heavy workload of teachers. High quality teaching materials are essential for the teaching of grammar or English at secondary level. It has often been suggested that the

teaching content under the task-based approach is often process-oriented and indefinite, and it often depends on the methodology the teacher uses. It is most ideal if teachers can produce their own materials to suit the needs of the students. Under the constraints of the secondary teaching context, this is not always feasible. Teachers may select or adapt materials for their own purposes, but high quality task-based materials cannot be put together in an impromptu manner; they need to be carefully structured and designed. The weaknesses of the task-based textbooks pointed out by the teachers have shown that it is hard to produce high quality task-based materials which are highly contextualised, exposing students to relevant and rich vocabulary and at the same time drawing attention to grammatical forms effectively and sufficiently. Although students' production of authentic and spontaneous language is a major target of TBLT, the production of effective task-based materials for achieving this target can never be really authentic and spontaneous.

The findings have shown that student practice is a major component of class activities. These often looked like repetitive drilling of grammatical forms similar to the decontextualised discrete exercises in supplementary grammar books. No matter how inconclusive research results have been concerning the effectiveness of this kind of drilling, teachers (or perhaps students too) continue to perceive this kind of practice as helpful for facilitating students' acquisition of the structures. Such practice may take up too much class time that could have been spent on more variegated activities which require more meaningful interaction. Abundant materials for this kind of drilling can be found in the supplementary grammar books and materials. Students can in fact practise on their own if proper guidance or instructions can be given by the teacher, and they are supported by suitable learning resources. Student self-learning of grammar should be encouraged as this type of practice takes time and can be quite easily handled by students on their own. They can make use of various types of learning materials in grammar books

or electronic form, such as computer-assisted or computer-mediated learning materials or other grammar resources on the internet. Recent research has shown the versatility of computer technology in simulating task-based learning situations and creating beneficial grammar learning opportunities. This may be one possible direction to take in enhancing the teaching and learning of grammar in TBLT.

8.4.2 Policy

The findings show that the different components of policy, curriculum and reform may create conflicting demands on teaching and learning. Curricular guidance on English teaching approaches needs to be aligned with other educational policies and reform initiatives such as those related to the examination or assessment systems and improvement of teaching quality. This will create a coherent context for teachers to interpret and implement curriculum initiatives.

The teacher participants also seem to have been quite alienated from the process of curriculum development and transmission. Curriculum ideas were intended to be conveyed through curriculum documents, which are actually seldom consulted. Instead, curriculum ideas filtered through teaching materials to reach teachers and inform their teaching practice, very often in a restrictive manner favouring ideas which could be most easily operationalised in materials design and teaching. There is a need to improve the communication of curriculum ideas and increase the opportunities of teacher participation in curriculum development. There should be recognition for the professionalism of teachers' views and concepts as they are the implementers of the intended curriculum. Involving teachers more in the curriculum development process can develop their sense of ownership in curriculum implementation and enhance the practicability of the curriculum reform initiatives.

8.4.3 Further research

This study has investigated curriculum implementation of grammar teaching in the task-based curriculum based on concepts and practice, making use of multiple research methods and instruments in examining the actual process of teaching and learning, and the contextual factors which may have an impact on it. Findings indicate that such an approach generates rich data for piecing together a coherent picture to inform pedagogy. Such a research direction may be more fruitful than theoretical explorations and experimental studies on teaching and learning, which often yield conflicting results.

Future research on the teaching and learning of grammar or other pedagogical focuses can follow this direction in collecting data on concepts and practice from multiple perspectives. The investigation of pedagogy is best accomplished through the examination of the actual processes of teaching and learning, involving the interaction between the participants and the materials. In addition to qualitative analysis, simple statistical measurements can also serve as useful tools for making qualitative comparisons.

This study has also shown that investigating the subjective perceptions of the teachers is useful, as these are grounded on various contextual factors. Students' responses can complete the picture of how grammar teaching is perceived and practised, as they are the target of instruction and an important component of the teaching and learning process.

8.5 Final comments

The investigation of grammar teaching concepts and practice in the task-based secondary curriculum in this study is well grounded on the examination of the process of curriculum

implementation, bringing together important issues related to curriculum design, teaching materials and teaching practice to attain a holistic picture for informing teaching and learning.

The study presents rich data which can inform grammar pedagogy for the secondary task-based curriculum. The findings present the strategies teachers use to accommodate the conflicting demands of grammar and task-based teaching. These combine different traditional form-focused elements and the more meaningful and task-based elements. They indicate the ways teachers' concepts and practice interact with the other contextual factors, such as the curriculum and the teaching materials.

The study highlights the importance of concepts as a major construct for understanding curriculum implementation and classroom practice. These include concepts underlying the curriculum design and teaching materials, as well as the views, perceptions and pedagogical concepts and beliefs of teachers. In particular, the findings show that teachers' views and concepts are important in shaping their teaching practice and implementation of curriculum ideas. This indicates the usefulness of further research in investigating the subjective perceptions of the key participants in the teaching and learning process, such as the teachers and students.

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Appendices to Chapter 2

TABLE REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES

Appendix 2.1 Sample material on decontextualised presentation of grammar
(from Murphy (1994), *English Grammar in Use*)

- 8 My grandmother loved music. She play the piano very well.
9 A girl fell into the river but fortunately we rescue her.
10 I had forgotten to bring my camera so I take any photographs.

TABLE REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES

2 ARTICLES

TABLE REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY
RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES



Appendix 2.3 Sample material for heavy grammar explanation and use of
metalanguage (Jackson (1990). *Grammar and meaning: A
semantic approach to English grammar*)

TABLE REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES



TABLE REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES

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Appendix 2.5 Sample material maintaining a balance between presentation and practice (from Thornbury (2004), *Natural Grammar*)

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Appendix 2.6 Sample material for decontextualised practice for enhancing
grammatical knowledge
(from Lester (2001), *Grammar and Usage in the Classroom*)

Identifying Common Nouns

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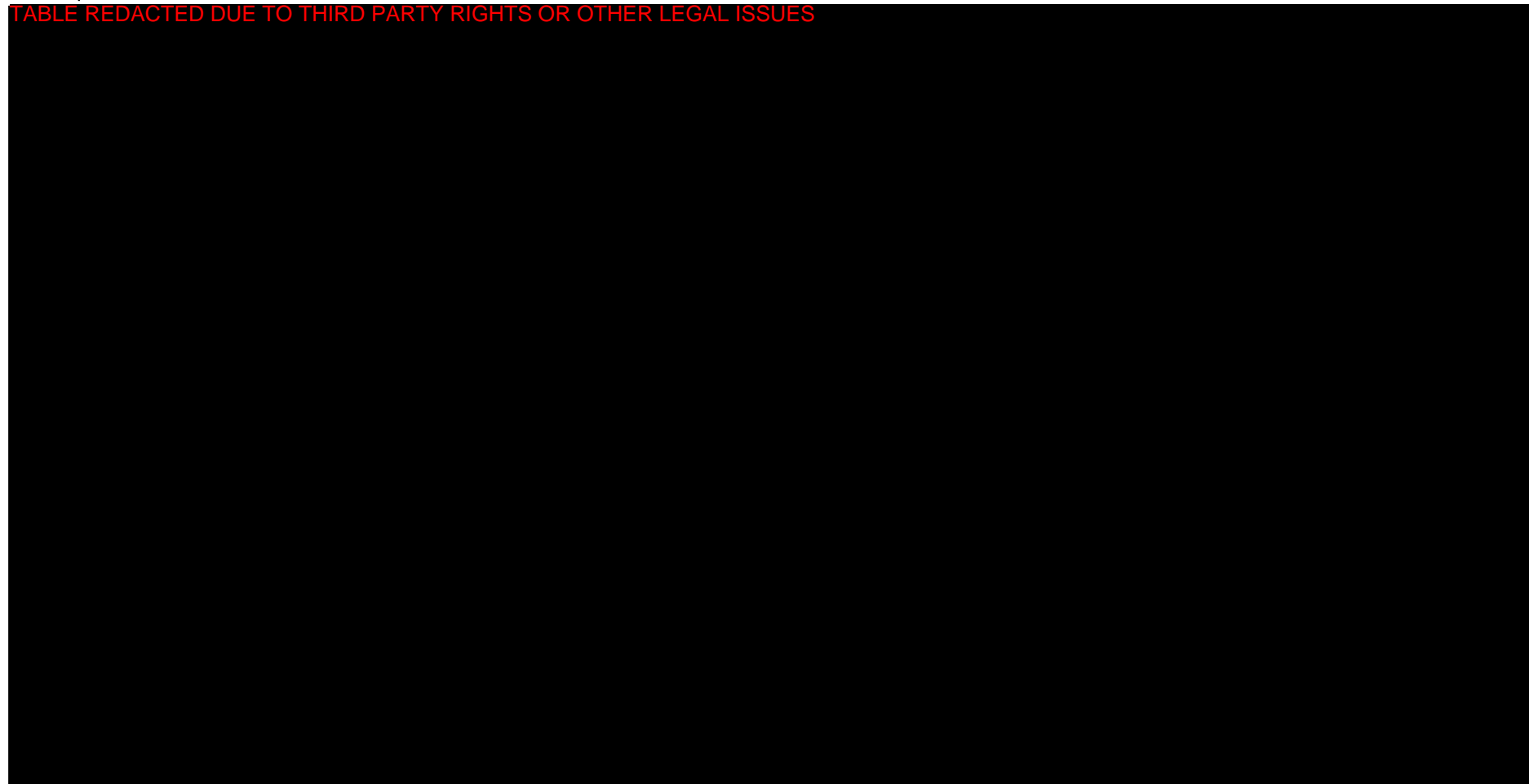


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Appendix 2.7 Sample material for contextualised practice for enhancing
grammatical knowledge (from Carter, Hughes and McCarthy (2000),
Exploring Grammar in Context)

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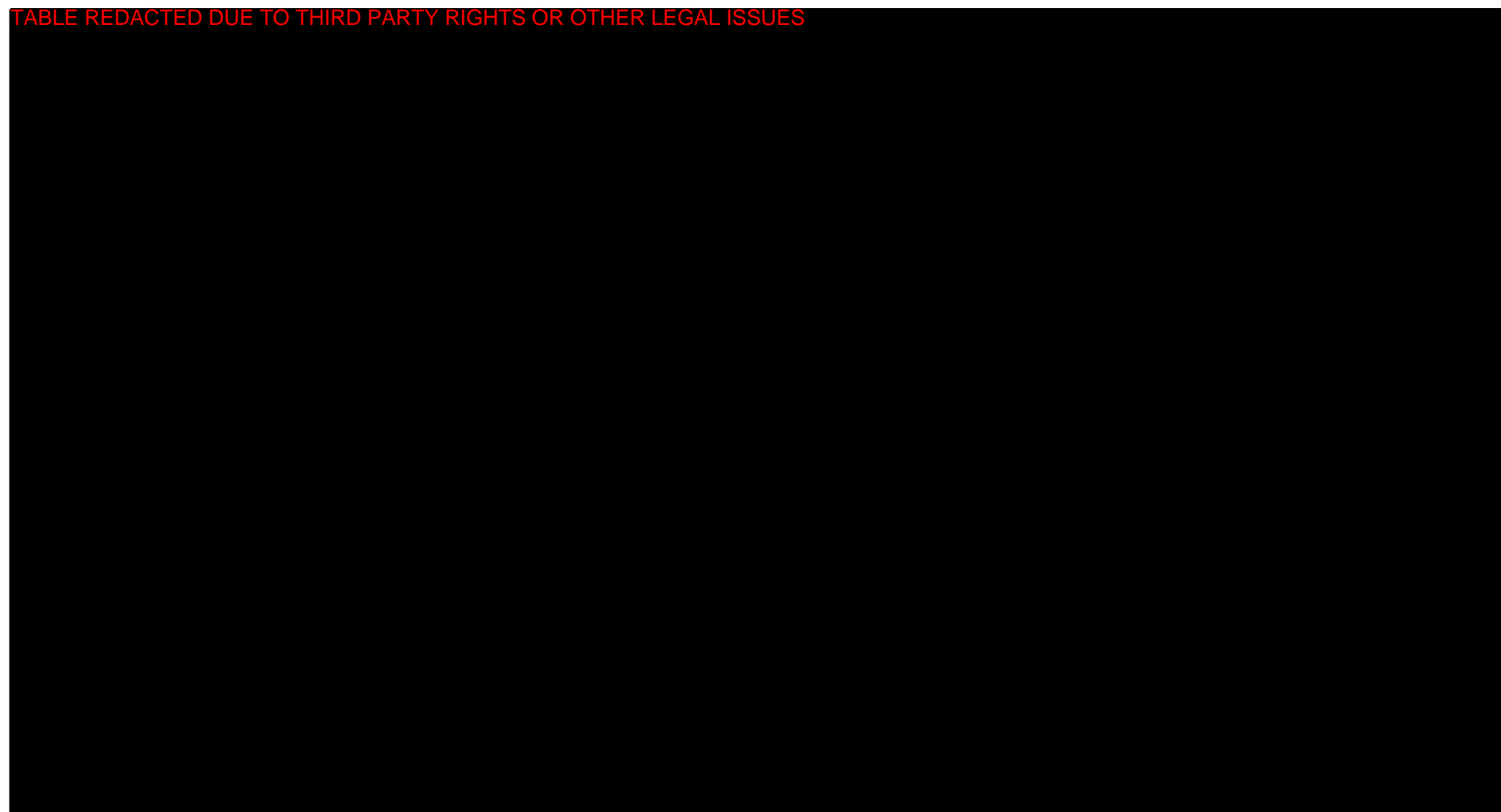
Appendix 2.8 Sample material for decontextualised and slightly more contextualised form-focused practice (from Vince (2008), *Macmillan English Grammar in Context*)

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Appendix 2.9 Sample material for meaning-focused practice
(from Larsen-Freeman (2007), *Grammar Dimensions 1*)

1. _____ cholesterol.
2. _____ fat.
3. _____ cholesterol.

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Appendix 2.10 Sample material for longer and more authentic production
(from Ackles (2003), *The Grammar Guide*)

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Appendices to
Chapter 4

Module: Cultures of the World
Unit: Customs, Clothes and Food of Different Places
Task: Eye on the World, Part 1

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Appendix 4.1 Exemplar learning task “Eye on the World”
(from CDC (1999), *Syllabuses for Secondary Schools*:
English Language (Secondary 1 - 5))

TaskPart 1: Floor Plan

Make notes on the floor plan below. They will help you remember important facts.

Floor Plan: Japan

<p>_____ Exhibition</p> <p>take _____ here</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>Parade for the mountain _____</p>	<p>_____ Stall</p> <p>latest _____ games</p>
<p>_____ -cinema</p> <p>_____ shows</p> <p>sword _____</p>	<p>Mt _____</p> <p>_____ trees</p> <p>with _____ and</p> <p>_____ flowers</p>	<p>Food Stall</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____ noodles</p> <p>_____</p>

Part 2

You are now preparing for the section on the USA. Listen to the tape and complete the notes below.

(Tapescript)

Ladies and gentlemen, please follow me to the next section of the park. Yes, we've arrived at the USA. Let's go in.

On your left is the Food Stall. You see, Americans love hot dogs. There are many hot dog stalls in the streets. Most people add ketchup and mustard to their hot dog. Well, it is easy to see the difference. Ketchup is red and mustard is yellow.

Then there are hamburgers. You can eat them with French fries. They are potatoes cut into long, thin pieces. Yes, you eat them with ketchup too. Many Americans like to add ketchup to their food.

And this big bird here is a turkey. Well, it looks like a big hen but we call it a turkey. Every November, American families get together for Thanksgiving. They give thanks for the good things in their lives. For dinner, they have roast turkey and lots of other food.

What are these? Oh these are tacos. How do you spell them? T-A-C-O. Yes, they look like large pockets. It's Mexican food but it's very popular in America. You can put any kind of food in the pockets. I usually put beans and meat. You want to put eggs, Jackie? Fine. You make your own tacos.

Follow me please to the next stall. This is a Halloween party. Halloween is on 31st October. Yes, it's the same day every year, 31st October. Children love Halloween. They dress as ghosts and witches. They paint their faces and dress in white or black cloths. Then they go round the houses. They knock on the door and say "Trick or Treat?" "Trick or Treat?" People give them sweets and the children are very happy. What are these? These are pumpkins. Yes, at Halloween, children make special lamps. They carve faces on pumpkins and put candles inside. Look at that pumpkin over there.

In front of you is the White House. The president of the USA lives and works here.

And next is Hollywood. Many films are made here every year. You see Batman over there? He's very strong and brave. That's Wonder Woman. Yes, she's beautiful and strong. Of course you can take photos with them.

Let's go to the next stall. Wow, we have cowboys here. They send cows from the farm to the market. Look at their jeans. Cowboys like to wear jeans because they are very strong. Now, they are worn by people all over the world.

*Teachers may make use of the following pictures to help learners:

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Part 2: Worksheet

Complete the following notes.

Notes on (1) _____

(2) Which of the following can you find in the Food Stall? Circle the right answer.

- a. sandwiches
- b. hamburgers
- c. milk shake

(3) At Thanksgiving, families eat roast

- a. turkey
- b. hen
- c. peacock

(4) Americans love _____, which look like big pockets.

* * * * *

Halloween

(5) Date: _____

(6) Children _____ their faces and dress as _____.

- (7) They say
- a. "Trick or Treat?"
 - b. "Thick or Thin?"
 - c. "Chick or Cheat?"

(8) People give them _____.

(9) People carve _____ on pumpkins.

* * * * *

(10) The _____ House.

(11) The president of the USA lives and _____ here.

* * * * *

(12) _____ are made in Hollywood.

(13) Visitors can take photos with _____ here.

* * * * *

(14) Cowboys wear _____.

(15) They are _____.

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Learning Grammar through a Task-based Approach: “Inviting a Friend to a Food Festival” (Secondary 1 – 3)

Introduction

Grammar has an important place in language learning and teaching. To enable learners to master language items and structures for effective communication, grammar needs to be taught strategically and purposefully, and ample opportunities should be provided for learners to apply what they have learnt in meaningful and realistic situations. The following exemplar shows how this can be done by engaging learners in grammar learning in the context of a communicative task.

The task illustrates that:

- grammar is learnt and taught in a meaningful way as learners are able to understand the purpose of learning the target items and structures which they need to apply in order to carry out the task of writing an invitation letter;
- grammar learning is a motivating experience, as learners are involved in a task they can relate to; and
- grammar learning can take place *before, during* and *after* a task.

The task helps learners:

- master the grammar items and structures that they have learnt through both practice and use;
- develop their skills of communication, collaboration, critical thinking, problem-solving and self-management; and
- develop their sensitivity towards language use in the process of communication, valuing both fluency and accuracy.

Learning and Teaching Process

1. Learners are asked to work on a task entitled “Food Festival”, which involves writing a letter to invite a friend to take part in a food festival that their school is going to organize.

Impact on Learning

- Through examining the nature and context of the task, learners gain an insight into the purpose(s) for using the language items and structures they are about to learn.

Invitation

Our school is going to hold a food festival. Every student writes a letter to invite a friend to join the event.
Details of the food festival:

Date: 15th November 20XX (Sunday)
Time: 10:00 am to 5:00 pm
Venue: School Hall
Progressive Secondary School
116 Tai Hang Road
Causeway Bay
Hong Kong

Number of stalls: 15
Food variety: Japanese, Chinese, American, Mexican
Types of food served: sushi, green tea noodles, dim sum,
fried noodles, spring rolls, hot dogs,
burgers, sandwiches, tacos, burritos,
desserts and many more.

Before the task

2. Learners are presented with a sample invitation letter in which they are guided to identify the key grammar items and structures that are needed for completing the task.

8 December 20XX

Dear Parents,

We would like to invite you to the Secondary One Christmas Party on 20 December. The party will start at six o'clock at the Hall of Lak Sing Middle School.

The Secondary One Choir will sing English and Chinese Christmas songs, and the Secondary One Drama Club will perform a very funny Christmas skit. There will also be other performances. After the performances, there will be delicious snacks and drinks.

Please return the reply slip to your child by 15 December. We hope to see you on 20 December.

Best wishes,

Organizing Committee
Secondary One Christmas Party 20XX
Lak Sing Middle School

Reply Slip

I _____ (name), parent of _____ of class _____, shall/shall not be able to join the Christmas Party on 20 December.

- Learners develop the ability to
 - > be aware of the importance of grammar in performing communicative tasks in English; and
 - > focus on the most important and relevant grammar items needed for a task

3. As prepositions of time are among the grammar items to be typically used in the task, more examples of their use are provided to the learners. They are asked to make observations on when and how the prepositions are used and share their observations with the class. The teacher confirms/corrects their observations. The teacher further explains the use of prepositions of time.

- Learners construct knowledge about a key grammar item through considering ample examples and developing a hypothesis about its use
- Learners' understanding of the target grammar point is reinforced

4. Learners practise the grammar item by completing a gap-filling exercise with discrete items focusing on prepositions of time.

Exercise - Prepositions of Time

Complete the sentences with the following prepositions - at, by, from, in, on or until

A birthday party

- I would like to invite you to my birthday party _____
- 18 May Please send back your reply _____ 18 April
- The party will be held _____ 6:00 p.m. _____ 1:00 a.m.
- The dance will be _____ 8:00 p.m. _____ midnight
- _____ midnight everyone will eat dumplings
- I have arranged a coach to take you home _____ 12:30 a.m.
- You are welcome to stay _____ 1:00 a.m.

A Christmas wedding

- Christmas is _____ Saturday this year
- The wedding banquet will start _____ eight o'clock in the evening
- The invitations must be sent out _____ 5:00 p.m. _____ Tuesday
- The wedding presents will not be opened _____ the Boxing Day

- 5 In pairs/groups, learners further practise the prepositions of time by completing another gap-filling exercise in the form of an invitation letter.

Complete the following letter with appropriate prepositions

10 November, 20XX

Dear Jack,

We would like to invite you to Suki's 14th birthday party. It is a surprise party so please do not tell her. The party is _____ 18 November.

We have rented a room at the Oaks Hotel in Wanchai. There will be food, drinks, music, dancing and karaoke. We think everyone will have lots of fun.

The party is _____ six o'clock _____ nine o'clock. However if you arrive _____ 5:45 p.m., you will be able to shout out "Surprise" when Suki comes in the door _____ 6:00 p.m. So arrive early if you can.

Please let us know _____ 15 November if you can come. Phone us on 9678 9678.

Sincerely,

(Suki's Parents)

- 6 Learners do a contextualized activity in which they write a short letter inviting a friend to a birthday party. They are reminded to pay particular attention to and check over the grammar item they have practised. The teacher checks learners' progress and gives guidance and feedback.

- Through engaging in meaningful, focused practice that progresses from exercises with discrete items to contextualized activities, learners develop their capabilities to

> use the grammar item accurately and appropriately, and

> advance from focusing on form to focusing on meaning while getting ready for a task.

During the task

7. Learners write a "Food Festival" invitation using a process writing approach. Grammar is dealt with through self monitoring and peer feedback.

- *Learners are given an opportunity to apply their grammar knowledge in an authentic situation that involves meaningful use of the language*
- *Through self monitoring and peer feedback, learners are able to*
 - *initiate self-directed learning;*
 - *develop critical thinking, problem-solving and collaboration skills; and*
 - *improve the language of their writing*

After the task

8. The teacher gives feedback on the learners' use of prepositions of time and provides further opportunities to revise the grammar item. For example, learners can be asked to make quizzes for their peers by using notices or advertisements of events in the media that show the use of time prepositions.

- *Through teacher feedback, learners are able to clarify/ consolidate their concepts about the use of the grammar item*
- *Through further revision, or extended work, learners' grammar knowledge is reinforced*

Workshops on Task-based Language Teaching, Learning and Assessment
(Part II Round 2)

22, 23 & 25 February 2002

Programme

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Appendix 4.3 Schedule for teacher development workshop on task-based language learning, teaching and assessment (EMB, 2000)

Grammar in Task-based Formative Assessment

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Appendix 4.4 Grammar material for teacher development workshop on task-based language learning, teaching and assessment (EMB, 2000)

Developing grammar activities

In Task 3 of the Exemplar Module for Key Stage 3, learners are required to carry out a series of shorter tasks. In Part 2 of Task 3, they are required to read a sample recipe and then write a recipe for another dish.

- In your small group, look over the task and discuss
 - *What* grammar and structure needs to be addressed in order for students to carry out the task
 - Ideas and suggestions for *how* grammar needs could be addressed during the
 - Pre-task stage
 - While-task stage
 - Post-task stage
- Present your ideas to the larger group

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Appendix 4.5 Outline of teacher development course on task-based language learning, teaching and assessment (EMB, 2000)

Course Outline

Session	Content	Mode	Follow-up task
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curriculum and curriculum development. Task-based language learning, teaching and assessment. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is it? How is it different from other approaches? Implementing a task-based approach in a specific teaching and learning context. 	<p>Facilitator input and discussion activities</p> <p>Task-based learning experience and discussion</p> <p>Discussion activity</p>	<p><i>Reflective Writing Task 1</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflect on how you are/might be involved in curriculum development in general and, in particular, planning for task-based language learning, teaching and assessment. Reflect on what task-based language learning, teaching and assessment is and how it differs from other approaches. Reflect on the teaching approach that you currently most often adopt and the pedagogical beliefs behind this approach.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The place of grammar in task-based language learning, teaching and assessment. Differences between tasks and exercises and how they complement each other in task-based learning/teaching. Selecting and adapting published materials for task-based learning, teaching and assessment. 	<p>Discussion activities and self-analysis exercise</p> <p>Practical/hands-on activity requiring you to select and adapt published materials and develop a task-based lesson plan to teach a chosen grammar item</p>	<p><i>Reflective Writing Task 2</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Try out the lesson that you have planned and report on the effectiveness of the task and general response of your students.

3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing criteria for 'good' learning tasks. The relationship between tasks, units and modules. Use of pre- and post-task activities, extended tasks and projects. Integrating language skills, dimensions of language use and communicative functions and language forms. Promoting the enhancement of language development strategies and attitudes. 	<p>Facilitator input and discussion activities</p> <p>Practical/hands-on activity requiring you to work your previously developed lesson into a unit of complementary tasks</p>	<p><i>Reflective Writing Task 3</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Try out another task that you have developed and report on the effectiveness of the task and general response of your students.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The learning, teaching and assessment cycle. Use of formative and summative assessments to enhance learning and teaching. Learning targets of the English Language syllabus and target-oriented assessment. Determining task difficulty. Establishing criteria for task-based assessment. 	<p>Discussion activities</p> <p>Activity requiring you to evaluate an assessment task.</p>	<p><i>Resource Materials for a Task-based Approach</i></p> <p>Bring to Session 5 one example of language arts materials and a review of a website that might be used in the module that you are developing.</p>
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing a hierarchy of learning tasks from an identified theme. Identifying and exploiting students' interests. Published materials for task-based language learning, teaching and assessment. Other resource materials for task-based language learning, teaching and assessment. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using language arts resource materials (poems, plays, novels, films, songs etc). Using multi-media resource materials (in particular the WWW). Planning for task-based teaching and assessment. 	<p>Facilitator input and discussion activities</p> <p>Activity requiring you to discuss other resource materials that might be used to work your previously developed unit into a thematically unified module</p> <p>Action planning task and compiling of portfolio</p>	<p><i>Portfolio</i></p> <p>Submit a portfolio of your reflective writing (and copies of tasks to which your writing refers). The portfolio should also include a plan of action as to how you will make future use of the tasks that you have developed throughout the course and/or how you might implement a task-based approach with your class(es).</p>

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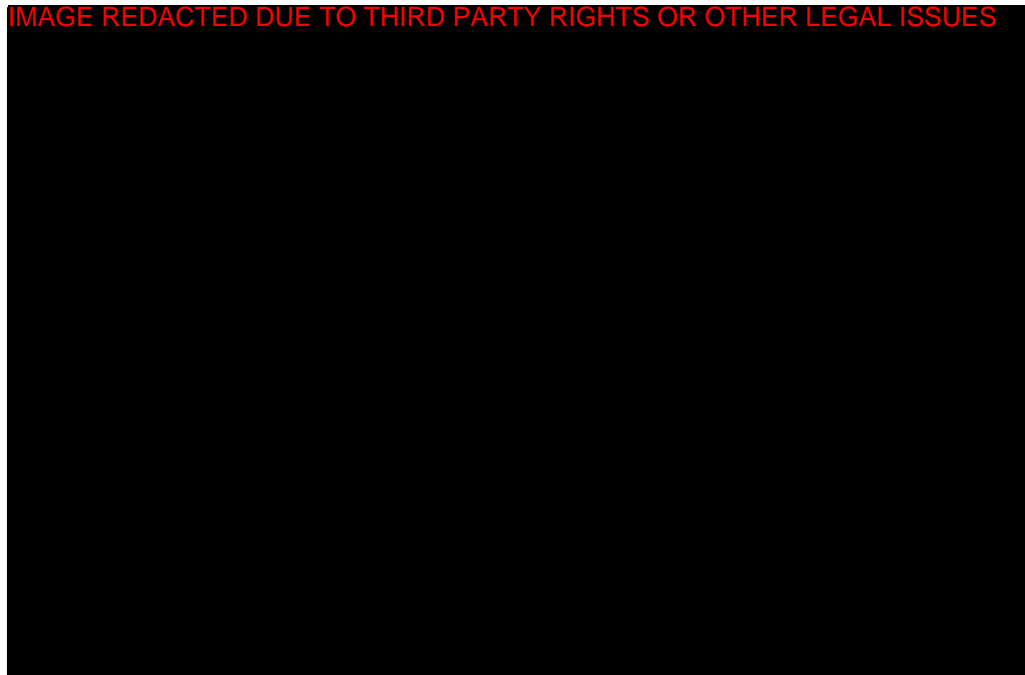
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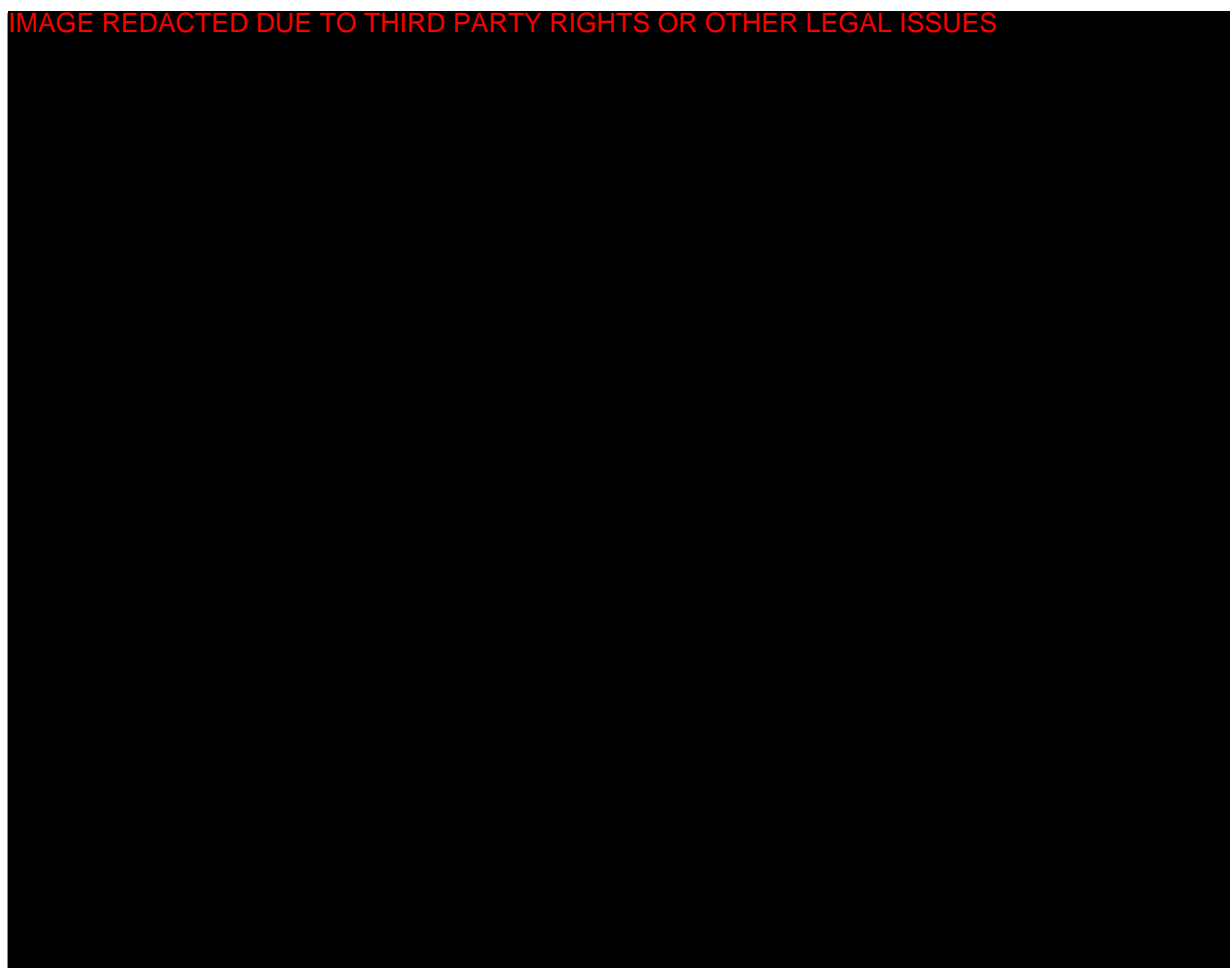
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Activity 3 In groups compare the task below and the exercises you have discussed for Activity 1. Identify their differences.



(Adapted from *Grammar Practice Activities: A practical guide for teachers* by Penny Ur, Cambridge University Press, 1988)

Activity 4 Study the task and the exercises again. Then in groups discuss how you would use these exercises and tasks to teach gerunds. You may suggest some new exercises or tasks if necessary.

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Self-assessment Units 3-5 (pp. 98-100)

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Appendix
Game — What Is It?
Checker Sheet

Appendix 4.7 Longman Express 1A Contents page

3 listening activity
extended writing task

2 mini-writing task

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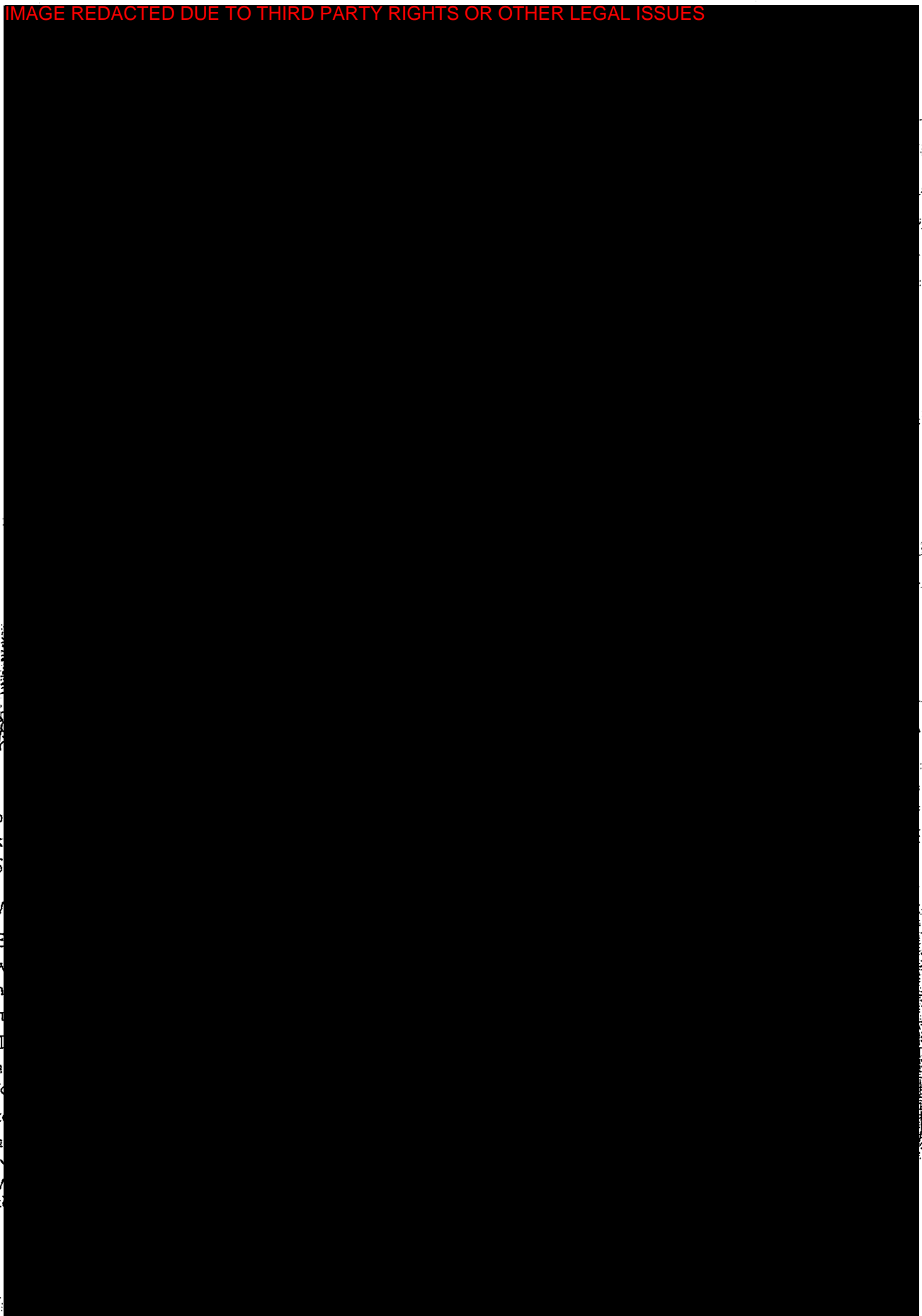


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Include any
information

for name of restaurant: the place is called a private house and former owner

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Appendices to
Chapter 5

Research questions

The following is the fourth research question to be addressed:

Question 4: How do individual teachers perceive and practice grammar teaching?

A number of subsidiary questions developed to address Question 4:

1. How do teachers' perceive grammar teaching?
 - (a) What are teachers' views towards how grammar should be taught within the task-based curriculum?
 - (b) What are the teachers' views, attitudes and beliefs towards grammar teaching in general?
2. How do teachers' practise grammar teaching in their own classes?
 - (a) How do teachers teach grammar under the task-based curriculum?
 - (b) Do teachers practise what they believe in teaching grammar?
3. What other factors can influence how teachers perceive and practise grammar teaching?
 - (a) How do the teaching materials influence the way that grammar is taught?
 - (b) What other extraneous factors related to the wider educational context may influence how teachers perceive and practise grammar teaching?

Interview questions

Interview 1

Part 1: Teachers' general perception of grammar teaching

1. Why do you choose this lesson for observation? Is this a typical grammar lesson you usually have with your students? What other methods you often used but haven't had a chance to use in this lesson?
2. Describe the grammar teaching approach you are using briefly.
3. How is grammar teaching in this lesson connected to the tasks students need to complete for this unit.

4. Do you think grammar teaching is important for teaching English? Do you put emphasis on grammar teaching in your classes?
5. How much do you know about the grammar teaching approach described in the curriculum documents? Which curriculum documents have you read/are you familiar with? Is your way of teaching grammar compatible with the methodology suggested in the curriculum documents? Is your way of teaching grammar compatible with the task-based approach? What do you think about the grammar teaching approach suggested in the curriculum documents?
6. Did you attend any teacher development seminars/workshops organised by the EMB related to grammar teaching. Are they useful? How have they influenced the way you teach grammar?
7. What grammar teaching approach(es) do you endorse in teaching? Do you practice it/them in your own classes? Are there any grammar teaching approaches or theories on grammar teaching which have produced an impact on the way you teach?
8. What other factors/policies have influenced your grammar teaching approach (e.g. benchmark test)?
9. Do you teach grammar differently now compared to previously before the new task-based curriculum is implemented?

Part 2: Teacher's perception of grammar teaching in relation to her teaching practice

Questions to elicit teacher reflections on her lessons or explanations of intentions or strategies using stimulated recall methodology (based on the theoretical framework for analysing grammar teaching practice)

Interview 2

Part 1: Teachers' general perception of grammar teaching

1. How is this lesson similar or different to the previous lesson in terms of grammar teaching?
2. What do you think about the materials you have tried out? Are they appropriate materials for implementing the grammar teaching approach recommended in the curriculum documents? Are the materials compatible with the task-based approach?
3. How is grammar teaching presented in the textbook you are using? Is the grammar teaching material compatible with the grammar teaching methodology suggested in the curriculum documents?

4. Does the textbook provide sufficient materials for grammar teaching? Do you use supplementary grammar teaching materials for your classes? What are they like?
5. What role do you (or the teaching profession) play(s) in formulating ideas concerning grammar teaching in the curriculum documents?
6. Are you committed to the implementation of the grammar teaching approach suggested in the curriculum documents?
7. Do you think the ideas on grammar teaching are generally endorsed by the teaching profession?
8. How do you think grammar should be taught in the task-based curriculum?

Part 2: Teacher's perception of grammar teaching in relation to the grammar lesson she tried out

Questions to elicit teacher reflections on her lessons or explanations of intentions or strategies using stimulated recall methodology (based on the theoretical framework for analysing grammar teaching practice)

Research questions

The following is the fourth research question to be addressed:

Question 4: How do individual teachers perceive and practice grammar teaching?

A number of subsidiary questions developed to address Question 4:

1. How do teachers' perceive grammar teaching?
 - (a) What are teachers' views towards how grammar should be taught within the task-based curriculum?
 - (b) What are the teachers' views, attitudes and beliefs towards grammar teaching in general?
 - (c) How do the ideas from the curriculum documents influence the way that teachers perceive and practise grammar teaching?
2. How do teachers practise grammar teaching in their own classes?
 - (a) How do teachers teach grammar under the task-based curriculum?
 - (b) Do teachers practise what they believe in teaching grammar?
 - (c) Are teachers' teaching practice compatible with their perceptions?
3. What other factors influence how teachers perceive and practise grammar teaching?
 - (a) What influences teachers' grammar teaching methodology most?
 - (b) How do the teaching materials influence the way that grammar is taught?
 - (c) What other extraneous factors related to the wider educational context may influence how teachers perceive and practise grammar teaching?

Interview questions

Interview 1

At the beginning of the interview

1. Before I start asking you more specific questions, is that anything special about the lesson you would like to talk about first?

Interview questions for research question 1

2. Describe the grammar teaching approach you used in the lesson briefly.

3. What grammar teaching theories do you endorse in teaching? Are there any teaching theories or ideas from grammar teaching research you have often practised in your classes. Are there any names you remember?
4. Do you think grammar teaching is important for teaching English? Do you put emphasis on teaching grammar in your classes?
5. How do you think grammar should be taught under the task-based approach? Is your way of teaching grammar compatible with the task-based approach?
6. How is grammar teaching in this lesson connected to the tasks students need to complete for this unit?
7. Is your way of teaching grammar compatible with the methodology suggested in the curriculum documents? What do you think about the grammar teaching approach suggested in the curriculum documents? Have you read them or are you familiar with them?

Interview questions for research question 2

8. Why do you choose this lesson for observation? Is this a typical grammar lesson you usually have with your students? What other methods you often used but haven't had a chance to use in this lesson?
9. Can you usually practise what you believe in in your classes?
10. When did your school start to change to task-based textbooks? Do you teach grammar differently now compared to previously before the new task-based curriculum is implemented (in 2002)?

Other questions which arise from any special features of the lesson in relation to grammar teaching practice.

Interview questions for research question 3

11. How is grammar teaching presented in the textbook you are using? Is the grammar teaching material compatible with the grammar teaching methodology suggested in the curriculum documents?
12. What do you think about the materials for grammar teaching provided in the textbook you are using?
13. Does the textbook provide sufficient materials for grammar teaching? Do you use supplementary grammar teaching materials for your classes? What are they like?
14. What has the greatest influence on your grammar teaching approach?
15. What extraneous factors/policies have influenced your grammar teaching approach?

Interview 2

At the beginning of the interview

1. Before I start asking you more specific questions, is there anything special about the lesson you would like to talk about first?

Interview questions for research question 1 & 2

2. Describe the grammar teaching approach you used in the lesson briefly.
3. How was this lesson similar or different to the previous lesson in the way grammar is taught? Did you do what you usually do in teaching grammar? Why or why not? Do you like the way you taught grammar in this lesson?
4. Was your way of teaching grammar compatible with the task-based approach in this lesson?
5. Was your way of teaching grammar compatible with the methodology suggested in the curriculum documents?
6. What do you think about the materials you have tried out? Are they appropriate materials for implementing the grammar teaching approach recommended in the curriculum documents? Are the materials compatible with the task-based approach?
7. Are you committed to the implementation of the grammar teaching approach suggested in the curriculum documents?

Other questions which arise from any special features of the lesson in relation to grammar teaching practice.

Interview questions for research question 3

8. Did you attend any teacher development seminars/workshops organised by the EMB related to grammar teaching. Are they useful? How have they influenced the way you teach grammar?
9. Did you attend any other seminars organised by the publishers or other institutes related to grammar teaching? Are they useful? How have they influenced the way you teach grammar?
10. What role do you (or the teaching profession) play(s) in formulating ideas concerning grammar teaching in the curriculum documents?
11. What do you think about the government policies towards English Language Education? Do they have any influence on the way you teach grammar or practise task-based teaching, e.g. the benchmark tests?
12. What other factors/policies have influenced your grammar teaching approach (e.g. benchmark test)?

Wh-questions (where, when, who, what, which, how, why)

(Adapted from Unit 4 of *Longman Express 1A* (2004))

for the section "Language Focus", p.67-69)

A. The structure of wh-questions

We use 'Where', 'When', 'Who', 'What', 'Which', 'How' and 'Why' to ask questions. The answers to these questions usually give more information than yes/no questions.

Example

Student A: Did you see the film last night?

Student B: Yes.

Student A: How was it?

Student B: _____

In the dialogue above, Student A asks a yes/no question to lead Student B into the topic. Then he/she asks a wh-question to get more information.

Study the following sentences from a conversation between two students in a restaurant.

Student A (Question)

Student B (Reply)

- | | |
|--|------------------------------|
| 1. <u>Where</u> is the waiter? | He's <u>in the kitchen</u> . |
| 2. <u>Who</u> is the owner of the restaurant? | <u>Mr Lee</u> . |
| 3. <u>What</u> is the name of that dish? | <u>Curry chicken</u> . |
| 4. <u>Which</u> is your favourite dessert on the menu? | <u>The banana pancake</u> . |
| 5. <u>When</u> did you try the fried pork chops? | <u>Last week end</u> . |
| 6. <u>Why</u> don't you like chilli prawns? | <u>It's too hot</u> . |
| 7. <u>How</u> do you feel about the food in this restaurant? | <u>I like it very much</u> . |

What information is given for each question?

1. Where: _____
2. Who: _____
3. What: _____
4. Which: _____
5. When: _____
6. Why: _____
7. How: _____

We can also form questions with 'What'/'Which' + a noun/noun phrase. We use these structures when we need to get more detailed information. For example, we use 'Which' + a noun/noun phrase when we ask someone to choose from a list of people or things.

Examples

What ingredients are in this dish?

What food do you like best?

Which dish is the most popular in this restaurant?

Which restaurant in Taikoo Place do you like best?

Work with a partner. Take turns to ask one question about his/her lessons today using 'What' + a noun/noun phrase and one question using 'Which' + a noun/noun phrase. Write down your question and your partner's answer below.

Example

Student A: Which student was punished in the P. E. lesson?

Student B: Henry.

1. Question: _____
Answer: _____

When we ask a Wh-question with the verb 'to be', we should pay attention to:

1. the tense of the verb.
2. whether the subject is singular or plural.

We can ask and answer Wh-questions with the verb 'to be' in the simple present tense and the simple past tense.

Examples

Where is/was the menu?

Which are/were your favourites?

(Please refer to p.68 of the textbook for more examples.)

B. Practising wh-questions

Work with a partner. Read the following paragraph and take turns to ask your partner three questions about the paragraph. Then write down the questions and answers.

It was Joyce's birthday last Sunday, the 24th of October. To celebrate her birthday, her

parents took her out for lunch. The family went to a Thai restaurant in Kowloon Tong. The name of the restaurant was The Moonlight. They had a lot of hot food, such as chilli prawns, curry beef and hot fish cake. They all enjoyed the meal very much because they liked hot food. After lunch, they went shopping in City Plaza. They had to leave early as Joyce suddenly remembered she was having a test on Monday. It was 4:30 when they arrived home.

1. Question: _____
Answer: _____

2. Question: _____
Answer: _____

3. Question: _____
Answer: _____

C. Producing wh-questions

Work with a partner. In a school activity, you met three exchange students who came from abroad. You are now exchanging information about them by asking your partner wh-questions. Fill in the blanks after getting the information from your partner. Then write down one example of a question you asked for each of the four columns.

Student A

<i>Name</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Language</i>	<i>Hobby</i>
Robert Bush	Japan		hiking
	Spain	Spanish	
			cycling

- Question (for name): _____
- Question: (for country): _____
- Question: (for language): _____
- Question (for hobby): _____

Study the questions you have written down. Are they similar to the structure of the wh-questions presented in the table on page 68 of your textbook?

Yes./No.

Wh-questions (where, when, who, what, which, how, why)

(Adapted from Unit 4 of *Longman Express 1A* (2004)

for the section "Language Focus", p.67-69)

A. The structure of wh-questions

We use 'Where', 'When', 'Who', 'What', 'Which', 'How' and 'Why' to ask questions. The answers to these questions usually give more information than yes/no questions.

Example

Student A: Did you see the film last night?

Student B: Yes.

Student A: How was it?

Student B: _____

In the dialogue above, Student A asks a yes/no question to lead Student B into the topic. Then he/she asks a wh-question to get more information.

Study the following sentences from a conversation between two students in a restaurant.

Student A (Question)

Student B (Reply)

- | | |
|--|------------------------------|
| 1. <u>Where</u> is the waiter? | He's <u>in the kitchen</u> . |
| 2. <u>Who</u> is the owner of the restaurant? | <u>Mr Lee</u> . |
| 3. <u>What</u> is the name of that dish? | <u>Curry chicken</u> . |
| 4. <u>Which</u> is your favourite dessert on the menu? | <u>The banana pancake</u> . |
| 5. <u>When</u> did you try the fried pork chops? | <u>Last week end</u> . |
| 6. <u>Why</u> don't you like chilli prawns? | <u>It's too hot</u> . |
| 7. <u>How</u> do you feel about the food in this restaurant? | <u>I like it very much</u> . |

What information is given for each question?

1. Where: _____
2. Who: _____
3. What: _____
4. Which: _____
5. When: _____
6. Why: _____

We can also form questions with 'What'/'Which' + a noun/noun phrase. We use these structures when we need to get more detailed information. For example, we use 'Which' + a noun/noun phrase when we ask someone to choose from a list of people or things.

Examples

What ingredients are in this dish?

What food do you like best?

Which dish is the most popular in this restaurant?

Which restaurant in Taikoo Place do you like best?

Work with a partner. Take turns to ask one question about his/her lessons today using 'What' + a noun/noun phrase and one question using 'Which' + a noun/noun phrase. Write down your question and your partner's answer below.

Example

Student A: Which student was punished in the P. E. lesson?

Student B: Henry.

1. Question: _____
Answer: _____

When we ask a Wh-question with the verb 'to be', we should pay attention to:

1. the tense of the verb.
2. whether the subject is singular or plural.

We can ask and answer Wh-questions with the verb 'to be' in the simple present tense and the simple past tense.

Examples

Where is/was the menu?

Which are/were your favourites?

(Please refer to p.68 of the textbook for more examples.)

B. Practising wh-questions

Work with a partner. Read the following paragraph and take turns to ask your partner three questions about the paragraph. Then write down the questions and answers.

It was Joyce's birthday last Sunday, the 24th of October. To celebrate her birthday, her

parents took her out for lunch. The family went to a Thai restaurant in Kowloon Tong. The name of the restaurant was The Moonlight. They had a lot of hot food, such as chilli prawns, curry beef and hot fish cake. They all enjoyed the meal very much because they liked hot food. After lunch, they went shopping in City Plaza. They had to leave early as Joyce suddenly remembered she was having a test on Monday. It was 4:30 when they arrived home.

1. Question: _____
Answer: _____
2. Question: _____
Answer: _____
3. Question: _____
Answer: _____

C. Producing wh-questions

Work with a partner. In a school activity, you met three exchange students who came from abroad. You are now exchanging information about them by asking your partner wh-questions. Fill in the blanks after getting the information from your partner. Then write down one example of a question you asked for each of the four columns.

Student B

<i>Name</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Language</i>	<i>Hobby</i>
		Chinese	
Tom Clinton			windsurfing
Michael Kerry	France	English	

1. Question (for name): _____
2. Question: (for country): _____
3. Question: (for language): _____
4. Question (for hobby): _____

Study the questions you have written down. Are they similar to the structure of the wh-questions presented in the table on page 68 of your textbook?

Yes./No.

Appendix 5.3 Sample letter to principal

Date _____

Mr/Ms _____

The Principal

_____ Secondary School

Hong Kong

Dear Mr/Ms _____

I am an instructor working at the _____ and a research student studying for the degree of PhD in Education at the Institute of Education, University of London. I am conducting a research study to investigate Hong Kong secondary teachers' perception and implementation of grammar teaching approaches for the English Language curriculum, and would like to seek your permission to invite a teacher in your school to take part in my investigation.

I have gained an initial understanding from Ms _____ to conduct two lesson observations with one of her English classes in your school in ____ (Month) _____. Each lesson observation will be followed up by an interview with the teacher. For the purpose of analysis for my thesis, the observations and interviews will be audio-recorded. The collected data will be used for no other purpose than contributing to my research. The school and the teacher participant will remain anonymous throughout the investigation.

I hope I could be given a chance to make this occasion an opportunity to share with Ms _____ ideas and experiences on grammar teaching. I would also be glad to share my research findings with her when I have completed my thesis.

If you would like to have further details on anything you would like to clarify, please contact me by phone at _____, or by e-mail at _____. Alternatively, you could also speak to Ms _____.

Thank you for your kind help.

Yours sincerely

Chiu Lai Wan, Hazel

Appendix 5.4a Sample transcription for lesson observations (pilot study)

Teacher 1 Lesson 1

(Total length: around 32 minutes)

1. Teacher: Now, before I start, I would like to ask you a question. Do you know what is an article? Do you know what is an article? [inaudible students' speech] Arctic Circle? No. Sorry. It is ... Arctic Circle is for geography. No. What is an article? I think I have told you but maybe you do not know the name. Maybe you do not know the name, all right. You do not know the name. It is a grammatical term. But later when I show you, you'll know what it is. I am going to give you the worksheet first. Because you have to do the worksheet eh when I – when I teach, all right? [pause for distributing worksheet] So, do you all have the worksheet? All right, now, so, don't write you name first. Just listen first. Look here and listen. All right. What is an article? Yes. [inaudible students' speech] Someone tell me ... a, an, the. Yes, a, an, the. OK. So, today we are going to talk about articles and of course I will divide them into two groups because there are two groups of articles. One is the indefinite article. Another kind is the definite article. All right? Although there are three words – a, an, the, but actually they are divided into two groups. One group is called indefinite article. Another group is called definite article, all right? So, in your worksheet, under number 1, there are altogether three articles. So you write down what are they. You Write down a, an in the brackets to write indefinite article. And then the is called definite article. I will tell you what they are, right? I will explain to you what it is this one is called indefinite article, why is that one is called definite article. First of all, look at these two word. What is the meaning of definite and indefinite. I don't think you know, so I will tell you. Definite means that I am very sure this is the one. Indefinite means it is not very clear. I don't know which one is. It's called indefinite. Not very clear. Not specifically a certain person. Then it is indefinite. Now, do you need me to switch off the light. Is it better? Switch off the light? Switch off this one. Is it better? All right. Let's go on. Now, this is just a general introduction of what is an article. Of course you have to know how to use it. How to use it is more important. All right? Just to know what they are is not important, but how to use it is important. And when to use it is important. And also, in some, in some cases, no article is

needed. Sometimes [?we] don't need an article. If you put a, or an or the in front of it, then it is wrong. All right? By the way when are we going to use it. I mean ... sorry. We will work together with another word. An article work together with another word. What is that word? Now, what part of speech? I remember I taught you the part of speech last lesson, all right? I have mentioned one part only. I have mentioned eh two, no sorry, I have mentioned two. Last time I have mentioned two part of speech. So can you tell me which part of speech I have mentioned is related to articles. Yes, xxx.

2. Student: A noun.

3. Teacher: Yes, a noun. It is related with noun. Article goes together with noun. We will not put an article together with a verb, but we will use an article together with a noun. They work together. Make a pair. All right? So articles work together with a noun. Of course it can be put in front of an adjective as well. Now, I will give you an example, a boy, a girl, right? Girl and boy are nouns, so a boy, article describes a boy, only one boy, a girl, only one girl. Understand? Or, what, an apple, an apple, so we use an apple, only one apple. And we can also use it before an adjective. Who can give me an example? A boy, in between, we can put an article. A good, yes, a good boy, right. So, good is an adjective, we put a in front of good. We can use a in front of good, instead of in front of the boy, right? Anyway, it works together with a noun. Without a noun, we will not use the article. We would not say a good, but what. So without a noun, we would not use it. We need a noun to go with it, but of course we can use an adjective to describe a noun, and then we can still add the article in front of the adjective. Now up to now, do you understand? So, we are going to learn when are we going to use a or an, when are we going to use the, and when we don't need an article. All right? So you have to pay attention to these three areas. All right? This is a definition for an article. It is a word usually put before a noun. All right? You can find that in your worksheet, usually put before the noun. And there are three articles. You can find that in your worksheet, can you? [Examples? Can you see it?] Then the third line. I want you to fill in. They are a, an, the. So you put down in your worksheet. All right? Now, then, the second part. When we use a or an, we always put in front of a singular, countable noun. These are two very important words. Can you highlight it. First, it must be singular. Then, it must be countable. Who can give me an example of a singular countable noun? Highlight these two words – singular, countable. Who can give me an example of a singular, and

	then countable noun? Singular, xxx. Come on, just any example. Singular, and countable. No? Yes.
4. Student	A boy.
5. Teacher:	A boy? Boy? Is singular? Can you count boy? Can we count boy? Xxx, can we count them. Yes, OK, tell me, is water singular countable noun? Water? Can water be counted. You can count water? You can put water Can you count water? So is water countable? No, not countable. So, can we put a in front of water? No, OK. So, that is what I mean. Singular, countable. All right, sit down. So, you cannot count water. So, you cannot count water, so you cannot use a. xxx, stand up. Tell me what article before children. And the article a before children [inaudible student's speech].
6. Student	No.
7. Teacher:	No. Why not? [inaudible student's speech] Look at these two words. Plural. Very good. Children is not singular, so we can not put a in front of children, because children is plural. Can you get it? All right, one more word. Can we put a in front of sheep? S-h-e-e-p sheep. Tell me. Why not? Because sheep is plural. [inaudible student's speech] Yes, you are right, in a way, because sheep can be plural or singular. You can say no when you refer to sheep as a plural of sheep, but you can put a if [?we mean] only one sheep. Do you get it? We can count sheep, so you can put a sheep. All right? Now, so, this is one rule. And it has a meaning of one. Then, you may ask me a question. Why can't I say I saw one man, not I saw a man? What is the difference? You say a is one? What is the difference? Who can tell me. Can you tell me? No? All right. I will explain to you. When you use one, you are counting a number – one, two, three, four, five. One man is standing there. Only one. Now, if one say a man, [?you can with] any man. A man I don't know. Any man. So a man across the street. So a man. Any man. But if no one around him and there is only one person there, you want to highlight one man, and so one man standing there. That means no other people, only one man. There are no other women, only one man. You want to emphasize only one person, then we'll use this number, one. Otherwise, you just say, Oh, I saw a man. You can with one man. Do you remember indefinite article? It's not clear which man. Just a man, any man. So, we will not use one. Now, In your compositions, you sometimes make mistakes by saying one man, one boy, one friend. I have one friend. That means you only have one friend. Does that you only have one friend? You have no more friend, only one? Now, a means any friend. I have a good friend, but you do not know which ...

Appendix 5.4b Sample transcription for interviews (pilot study)

Teacher 1 Interview 1

(Total length: around 58 minutes – Part 1: 34 minutes; Part 2: 24 minutes)

Part 1 Teacher's reflections using stimulated recall

[Started from tape: The beginning of Lesson 1]

[Stopped at tape: We will not put an article together with a verb, but we will use an article together with a noun. They work together. Make a pair. All right?]

1. Teacher: Let's stop here. I am not sure here if I have mentioned the grammatical terms too often. For example, I asked them what is an article, and the children could not answer. Perhaps ... articles is what part of speech. Perhaps these questions are too difficult for the children. When I think back now, I will now consider whether it is necessary. I should have reversed my approach. I should have finished teaching first ... a, an, the, these are articles. It is better than asking them what is an article right at the beginning. Then perhaps they will ... Particularly definite article and indefinite article, it is not possible that they know. Then it is not appropriate to ask them the questions before teaching. Perhaps after I have finished teaching, I can ask them what is this type called and what is that type called. Then it may be better. ... But I have thought about whether there is a need to teach these terms. For me, I think there is the need. It can help you in your future teaching. When you carry on with teaching ... grammar, then you can use grammatical terms directly, and they will know what you are talking about. We need an article. There is no need to say we need a, an, the. What is a suitable article? If they know beforehand what is an article, then in your future teaching, you don't have to ask repeatedly what is an article? Do I have to teach you again? That is, I think grammatical terms are important, but here the approach should be reversed.

2. Researcher: Then I'll continue playing the tape. Actually I have got some questions on this point, but I'll ask you later when I will ask questions.

[Stopped at tape: So, it has the meaning of one, but it different when you say one man or a man.]

3. Teacher: Here, why did I put emphasis? It's because from my past experience, many students confused one with a. That's in the usage. So, when I taught up to that part, I suddenly thought that I had to elaborate this point. It's because I found they made a lot of mistakes. And some ... some of them still make the mistake even when they go to senior forms. It's not just at the Form 1 level. They are quite confused about using one and a. So, here, I intentionally put much emphasis on this point.

[Stopped at tape: But we cannot use it because it's uncountable. Now, so you write down some examples of h that make a sound.]

4. Teacher: In this a part, it is a coincidence that a student gave the word hair. And this is a good chance to remind them again of countable nouns and uncountable nouns, since I have just taught them countable nouns and uncountable nouns in the previous unit. Then, it makes it a kind of revision. Very often, in teaching grammar, sometimes we need to make use of opportunities for repeating things when students make mistakes. Because grammar needs repetition. Students often forget things right after they have learnt them. And sometimes they just remember one word and are not aware that the same applies to another word. Then we often need to make use of opportunities to repeat teaching old stuff.

[Stopped near the end of the tape: So always remember [*****]. These 3 transport. So, now remember to finish these, eh ...]

Part 2 Questions and answers

5. Researcher: If there is nothing special, we can go to [another part?]. Is it boring?

6. Teacher: OK, OK

7. Researcher: I'll ask you some questions. I'll ask something more general first. Then I'll ask you something about the lesson. About this grammar lesson, I would like to know if this is a typical lesson for how you usually teach grammar? Or you may use some other methods in your lessons normally?

8. Teacher: I think it should be a little different. This time I have a PowerPoint, and I have worksheets, so I would teach when I ask them to do the exercises. Teaching and doing occur at the same time. In the past,

	<p>when I taught other grammar lessons, I might teach first. After I have finished teaching, then they will do the exercises. However, this seems ... It is a little different, because I have a PowerPoint, so I am restricted by a PowerPoint. If there is no PowerPoint, I can do what I like. I may not need to adhere to the PowerPoint always. There are pros and cons for both. If there is a PowerPoint, it is more systematic. If you don't use a PowerPoint, you can use another method. That means it is different. It is not a typical lesson.</p>
9. Researcher:	<p>But the basic method still remain the same. For example, you will, you will first explain the grammar structures, and then ask them to do the exercises.</p>
10. Teacher:	<p>Yes, right. Yes. In principle, when I teach grammar, I usually explain the form or the structure. Then I talk about the usage, that is, the function. Both are important. Then they'll do the exercise. Sometimes, I will give them some tasks, some activities for them to try to do. But these are not many, because they need more time to prepare. And also, there are quite a lot of students. As there are many students, in smaller classes, such as in Form 1 with 20 students, I do more tasks comparatively. They can move around. But in Form 3, it is more difficult. First, Form 3 students are naughtier, because they are older. They don't like to follow instructions. So, in those classes, usually they do exercises after I teach them. So, I think it depends on the situation. Not every lesson is the same style. It depends on the class and whether the exercise can work, whether the topic can work. Yes.</p>
11. Researcher:	<p>For exercises, usually we mean something more controlled. For tasks, there is more production.</p>
12. Teacher:	<p>Yes, we have this.</p>
13. Researcher:	<p>You have this, right? But for grammar, you usually have more exercises, right?</p>
14. Teacher:	<p>Yes, there are more exercises, because there are a lot of limitations.</p>
15. Researcher:	<p>We usually talk about presentation, practice and production. Usually, after presentation, we give students something to do. There will be some production. I think you are ...</p>
16. Teacher:	<p>Yes, that is true. This is more frequent.</p>
17. Researcher:	<p>Do you think that the grammar teaching materials in this book are good? Are they useful or sufficient?</p>
18. Teacher:	<p>I think the materials are not sufficient, certainly insufficient. Because ... probably because there is a grammar book ...</p>

Teacher 1

Lesson 1 (S1; 32 mins , grammar focus – articles)

Structure of Lesson: Lengthy teacher-fronted presentations to explain grammatical concepts with elicitation of short responses from students for words and examples. Of the three common types of activities in a grammar lesson, presentation, practice and production, the emphasis on presentation was most obvious. The teacher spent most of the time on explaining the grammatical structures, eliciting only short responses from students occasionally. Teacher-fronted explanations sometimes lasted for around 5 minutes for just one turn (such as Turn 1 and 3). Near the middle of the lesson, the teacher asked students to work on an exercise (practice). However, individual work lasted for only a short time (Turn 37). It was soon followed by the teacher going through the answers with the students and explaining some special grammatical points. There were a total of 47 turns in the whole lesson.

Lesson 2 (S1; 34 mins.; grammar focus – wh-questions)

Structure of Lesson: Frequent teacher-fronted presentations were still a salient feature of the lesson, although they were comparatively less lengthy than in the previous lesson. This lesson was a little more interactive as students had more frequent turns to speak and produce slightly more language. Therefore, student practice received a little more attention. There was a short production task near the end when students worked in pairs to ask and answer questions (Turn 78). There were a total of 84 turns in the whole lesson.

Common features of the two lessons

- Use of metalanguage which was quite unfamiliar sometimes, such as definite and indefinite articles, singular/plural, countable/uncountable nouns, phrases, verb to be.
- Frequent and elaborate explanation of grammatical concepts
- Use of discrete item grammar exercises

Different features between the two lessons

Additional features shown in Lesson 2:

- More elicitation of students' responses
- More task-based activities
- Teacher-fronted presentation not focused on grammar explanation, as quite detailed instructions were given to students about how to carry out activities

Major difference: Compared to Lesson 1, Lesson 2 seemed to be a little less teacher-fronted and more interactive, as there was less grammar explanation and more elicitation of students' responses. This was probably caused by the different approach underlying the tried out grammar teaching material.

Major concepts emerging in the two interviews

- She supported the use of metalanguage and explicit explanation of grammatical structures and rules, as she believed these would help students to understand grammatical concepts and read about grammar.
- She seemed to favour task-based teaching methodology, but she was also aware of the constraints that go with it. For example, task-based teaching calls for a lot of preparation work; it is also not so suitable for large classes or older students; the approach often does not require students to use a lot of language; there is a lack of good task-based teaching materials; the practice of task-based teaching is constrained by a structural curriculum in her school.
- She believed that the heavy workload is a great obstacle for the effective implementation of task-based learning. Collaboration with other teachers in the same school (such as collaborative lesson planning) is important in producing good teaching ideas and materials for task-based teaching.

Overall comments.

- There were relatively fewer turns in the lessons, which was quite a marked difference compared to the lessons of the other teachers. It was mainly due to the teacher's frequent use of teacher-fronted grammar explanations.
- There were some differences in her grammar teaching practice between her two lessons. These differences might be due to the use of the provided material in Lesson 2.
- She supported explicit teaching of grammar within the task-based approach, but was very much aware of various factors which might hinder the uninhibited implementation of the task-based approach.

Teacher 2

Lesson 1 (S2; 39 mins; grammar focus – giving instructions)

Structure of Lesson: The lesson seemed quite interactive, as there were numerous exchanges between teacher and students throughout the lesson. There was no clear division into the stages of presentation, practice and production. Throughout the lesson, the teacher's presentation mingled with students' responses, as the teacher tried to involve the students throughout the whole lesson by eliciting responses from them. Many of these responses were not really students' own production of language, but reading out of given texts (such as the reading of the instructions from Turn 36 to 44). There were a total of 154 turns in the whole lesson.

Lesson 2 (S2; 40 mins; grammar focus – prepositional phrases of time)

Structure of Lesson: Like Lesson 1, this lesson also seemed quite interactive. There was no clear division into the stages of presentation, practice and production. Throughout the lesson, the teacher's presentation mingled with students' responses, as the teacher tried to involve the students throughout the whole lesson by eliciting responses from them. The only difference between this lesson and the previous one was that there were a few longer turns of teacher-fronted explanation of grammar. There were a total of 185 turns in the whole lesson.

Common features of the two lessons

- Some use of metalinguage
- Some brief explanations of grammatical concepts/rules
- Drawing attention to form through highlighting or referring to the special features of grammatical structures
- Use of repetition/revision to help students remember the grammatical structures
- Use of task-based activities
- Relatively longer turns for teacher-fronted presentation which were not focused on grammar explanation, but for giving quite detailed instructions o students about carrying out the activities

Different features between the two lessons

The following are additional features shown in Lesson 2:

- More use of metalinguage
- More lengthy explanations of grammatical concepts/rules

Major differences Although both lessons were quite similar in approach, there seemed

to be more teacher-fronted presentations in Lesson 2 than in Lesson 1. The use of metalanguage was also relatively more frequent and more complex. While basic grammatical terms like verb, subject were occasionally used in Lesson 1, in Lesson 2 grammatical terms like phrase, clause, sentence, text, or even discourse came up more frequently. There were also more lengthy explanations of grammatical rules and concepts. These seemed to be incongruent with the normal presentation style of the teacher shown in Lesson 1, which had shorter turns and more frequent teacher elicitation of student responses.

Major concepts emerging in the two interviews

- She believed in the need to use some metalanguage and the explanation of basic grammatical concepts. However, she was averse to the use of more unfamiliar metalanguage and disliked going deeply into grammatical rules and concepts.
- Her attitude towards explicit grammar teaching was quite negative.
- She seemed to be a staunch supporter of the strong form of the task-based approach. She considered tasks as the basic principle of organizing teaching and they help to facilitate the acquisition process. To her, it was very important that everything focused on the same theme. Anything which deviated from this was not task-based.
- She was very much aware of the other extraneous demands for effective teaching, such as making use of I.T. There were other limitations such as the tight schedule for covering the topics sufficiently and the need to teach according to examination requirements, which may not encourage the acquisition of good grammatical knowledge:

Overall comments. The teacher was a staunch supporter of the task-based approach. Although explicit teaching of grammar was acceptable to her, she believed that grammar teaching should be subservient to the task-based approach and should adhere to the major tenets of task-based teaching. She was very much aware of various factors which might hinder the uninhibited implementation of the task-based approach. There were some differences in her grammar teaching practice between her two lessons. These differences might be due to the use of the provided material in Lesson 2. Her attitude towards the provided material was quite negative.

Teacher 3

Lesson 1 (S2; 41 mins; grammar focus - connectives of reason and result)

Structure of Lesson: The lesson seemed quite interactive. There was no clear division into the stages of presentation, practice and production. Throughout the lesson, the teacher's presentation mingled with students' responses, as the teacher elicited short responses from the students for using the target structures, which varied from single words, phrases to short sentences. There were a total of 185 turns in the whole lesson.

Lesson 2 (S2; 38 mins; grammar focus - prepositional phrases of time)

Structure of Lesson: Like Lesson 1, this lesson also seemed quite interactive. There was no clear division into the stages of presentation, practice and production. Throughout the lesson, the teacher's presentation mingled with students' responses, as the teacher elicited short responses from the students for using the target structures, which varied from single words, phrases to short sentences. The only difference between this lesson and the previous one was that there were a few slightly longer turns of teacher-fronted explanation of grammar. There were a total of 221 turns in the whole lesson.

Common features of the two lessons

- There was nearly no use of metalanguage language in Lesson 1; in Lesson 2, very common grammatical terms like noun and preposition were used just a few times, aside from the repetitive references to the prepositional phrases of time which had to be referred to probably because it was the focus of the lesson.
- Occasional brief explanations of grammatical concepts or rules
- Elicitation of repeated responses from students in using the target structures, making use of communicative or task-based activities
- Explanation of structures making use of errors from students' production
- Drawing attention to form through highlighting or referring to the special features of the grammatical structures

Different features between the two lessons

The following are additional features shown in Lesson 2:

- Slightly more use of metalanguage
- Slightly more lengthy explanations of grammatical concepts or rules

Major differences: She seemed to believe more in teaching students how to use the structures than teaching students about grammatical concepts or rules. Although some parts of the material for lesson 2 called for more explicit attention to the grammatical

structures, she was able to get around the necessity for explanations most of the time and adhere to her use of production-based practice when she asked students to keep producing the target structures. She tended to use metalanguage and grammatical explanations slightly more in Lesson 2 but basically her teaching style was very stable and consistent in both lessons.

Major concepts emerging in the two interviews

- She supported a strong view of the task-based approach. She believed that it is necessary to adhere to the same theme or the same situation in task-based teaching; task-based teaching should lead to an outcome at the end in the form of solving a problem or accomplishing something, such as the production of a guide book or an itinerary.
- She supported a more task-based approach towards teaching grammar, where grammar is taught in context, using real-life situations. She was very much against the use of unfamiliar grammatical terms and the explicit explanation of grammatical rules.
- She was aware of the possible extraneous constraints on teaching, such as the unfavourable physical environment for teaching in the computer room, the falling standards of students and the need to cope with examinations.

Overall comments: She was a strong supporter of the task-based approach. There were only slight differences in the way she practised grammar teaching in her two lessons, as she seemed to be least affected by the provided material. She had a coherent concept about grammar and task-based teaching and taught both lessons in a consistent way. She did not very much support explicit teaching of grammar. She was also very much aware of various factors which might hinder the uninhibited implementation of the task-based approach.

Teacher 4

Lesson 1 (S1; 35 mins; grammar focus - present continuous tense)

Structure of Lesson: The lesson was marked by mostly teacher-fronted presentation. There was no clear division into the stages of presentation, practice and production. The teacher was the main presenter drawing students' attention to grammatical concepts and structures. Although she tried to elicit short responses from students throughout the lesson, most of these were for ensuring that they were following what she was saying. There were a total of 127 turns in the whole lesson.

Lesson 2 (S1; 34 mins; grammar focus - yes/no questions in simple present tense)

Structure of Lesson: The lesson was similar to Lesson 1 in most aspects. It was marked by mostly teacher-fronted presentation. There was no clear division into the stages of presentation, practice and production. The teacher was the main presenter drawing students' attention to grammatical concepts and structures. Although she tried to elicit short responses from students throughout the lesson, most of which were for ensuring that they were following what she was saying. The only difference between this lesson and the previous one was that the teacher spent more time in explaining the vocabulary. There were a total of 115 turns in the whole lesson.

Common features of the two lessons

- Use of metalanguage from time to time, e.g. present continuous tense, verb *to be*, vowel
- Frequent explanation of grammatical forms, e.g. when to add -ing, when to drop the -e before -ing, when to use double letters before -ing
- Using situations to contextualize the use of the structures, e.g. the cheering of the houses on the Sports Day

Different features between the two lessons

The following is the additional feature shown in Lesson 2:

- Spending quite a lot of time to explain the vocabulary in the dialogue

Major difference: She seemed to be teaching reading comprehension instead of teaching grammar in a large part of Lesson 2, as she explained the vocabulary quite often.

Major concepts emerging in the two interviews

- She supported the use of metalanguage and explicit explanation of grammatical

structures and rules, as she believed this would help students understand grammatical concepts and read about grammar.

- She favoured task-based teaching methodology (Teacher 4 Interview1: Turn 9; Teacher 4 Interview 2: Turn 148). Although these two lessons were not very task-based, she referred to another lesson under the theme of school picnic where task-based teaching was practised effectively
- She described obstacles for practising task-based teaching, such as the low standards of students and their lack of exposure to English in their everyday life; the demand on preparation time; and the lack of double lessons in her timetable that kept her from doing more time-consuming task-based oral activities.
- She was unresponsive to government policies and effort in curriculum development
- The greatest influence on her grammar teaching approach was from the textbooks and her studies on language teaching
- She was quite positive about the wash-back effects of the benchmark test on grammar teaching.

Overall comments: She supported both task-based teaching and the explicit teaching of grammar. There were some differences in her grammar teaching practice between her two lessons. These differences might be due to the use of the provided material in Lesson 2. She was very much distracted by the use of the reading material in the second lesson and spent quite a lot of time explaining the vocabulary. She was also very much aware of various factors which might hinder the uninhibited implementation of the task-based approach, although she seemed to be quite unresponsive to the government policies on education.

Appendix 5.6 Transcription notations

Transcription notations

...	pauses or interrupted speech
[?]	Words that are not clear are flagged with square brackets and question mark, e.g. [?doubled ?glossed]
[*****]	Inaudible speech
[]	Square brackets are used to give special comments of the transcriber, e.g. to indicate a slip of the tongue where the speaker does not say what she intends.
xxx	Name of student, to maintain anonymity
Student:	Speech by an individual student
Students:	Speech by groups of students in class elicitations of responses or choral reading by the whole class.

Appendix 5.7 Teacher's views towards grammar teaching questionnaire

Teachers' views towards grammar teaching

Please indicate whether you (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) are undecided, (4) agree, or (5) strongly agree with each of the following sentences. Circle one answer only for each statement.

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. It is important to teach grammar in teaching English. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. It is necessary to explain grammatical rules. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. It is necessary to draw students' attention to grammatical forms. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. It is necessary to use metalanguage (grammatical terms) in teaching grammar. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. It is necessary to drill students about grammar. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Students can gradually acquire the grammatical structures if they are constantly exposed to them, even though the grammatical structures are not taught explicitly. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. Students can gradually acquire the grammatical structures if they are given ample opportunities to produce them, even though the grammatical structures are not taught explicitly. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. I am committed to practising task-based teaching in my classes. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. It is necessary to teach grammar under the task-based approach. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. The grammatical structures the teacher teaches should be related to the tasks students have to complete. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. I have autonomy in deciding how to teach grammar. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. I put a lot of emphasis on teaching grammar in my classes. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. My students can understand the grammatical rules after I have taught them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. My students can use the grammatical structures more correctly after I have taught them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. My students like grammar lessons. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Thank you for your kind help!

Appendices to
Chapter 6

Appendix 6.1a Sample transcription for lesson observations (main study)

Teacher B Lesson 2

(Total length: around 34 minutes)

1	Teacher:	And that is, simple past tense. Now, it tells you when did it happen, when did he go shopping, when did he go shopping? It tell you ...? Yesterday, correct, OK. Very good, [*****] So yesterday. Now, we have the time word, yesterday. Sometimes we may say last week. Sometimes we may say two years ago. OK? Last week, last ... Tuesday. So, from this time word, OK, we know the time, indicating something of the past, and it stopped already. It happened but it didn't last. Now the second, second example is, this shopping centre opened in 2002. Now, the time word tells us it happened in 2002. The word in red opened, again we have simple past tense. And that's why in these days we are trying to learn. We try to remember the word table. ... Tomorrow we will have it from [*****] so that irregular tenses, irregular verb table. [*****] OK? Usually we finish the word with -ed, when it is in past tense, right? But go, went, gone. That's irregular. For the word open, we have opened, opened, -ed. Right? So [*****] is so simple. Everybody should understand. So, go went gone, we have went. Open, opened, opened. And ... how about if I have I am. I want to change it into simple past tense, I ... ?
2	Student:	Was.
3	Teacher:	Was. Yes. How about I see something ... become I ... ?
4	Student:	Saw.
6	Teacher:	Saw, yes. Well, eh, if you turn to page 48, if you turn to page 48, it tells you for the verb-to-be, the base form, the base form is be, the base form is be. But then you change according to the subject I was, we were, OK. And, we have another example, we have enjoy, e-n-j-o-y. We have the base form of the word enjoy. But for the past tense, what do we put? ... We add -ed, correct. Very good. We have -ed. So for the base form, we put -ed, OK? Maybe I, maybe you, maybe we. We just say enjoyed, -ed, OK? Now, eh, we have got some worksheets for you. ... OK, help me to distribute to your classmates, ... so we will do something in our Grammar Book

		later as homework, as homework. But don't worry, I will give you a lot of time. Today is Tuesday. I will ask you to take your Grammar Book back on Friday. So you have a lot of time, OK? I will tell you later what you have to do with the Grammar Book. ... But first of all, we have to say thank you to Ms Chiu. She has prepared the worksheet for us. Now what we are using is something from Ms Chiu, OK? ... So, simple past tense. ... Wow, on our worksheet we have a very smart boy. Who is he? Who is this smart boy?
6	Students	[*****]
7	Teacher:	Oh, Tony. Yes, yes, we have Tony, marked red. Yes, Tony. OK, the smart boy, Tony. Now, Tony, ... he did something on Sunday. He had a shopping trip. He had a shopping trip. ... Has everybody got the page? See whether it is printed on both sides, both sides. Yes, one spare OK, give it to me ... Thank you. Right, so, Tony tells us about his typical shopping trip on Sunday. Yes, xxx, are you on the page? You are not. OK, let's invite someone to read. Someone can be Tony at this moment. Who would like to read it for us? Who would like to read it for us? Xxx? Read what Tony is telling us. ... Louder please.
8	Student	On Sunday, I usually go shopping at Mongkok. I get up at 9 o'clock and have a light breakfast.
9	Teacher:	Thank you. Get up at 9 o'clock and have a light breakfast. Not heavy but a light breakfast. OK, next, xxx?
10	Student:	Then I take the MTR to Mongkok station. I walk along the streets near the station and look for shops I am interest in.
11	Teacher:	Yes, thank you. He take the MTR to Mongkok and he will look around for shops near the station, OK? Next one, yes, xxx?
12	Students:	There, there are lots of shops which sell the music CDs, ...
13	Teacher:	Yes, louder please.
14	Student:	Computer games and shops, sports wear.
15	Teacher:	Thank you, so there are lots of shops, wow, selling music CDs maybe [?HMV] and computer games. Yes. Many students like computer games, and sports wear, OK? And, xxx, the last sentence.
16	Student:	Most of the goods are quite expensive.
17	Teacher:	Oh, yes, but they are quite expensive. So, this is what Tony told us, OK? This was exactly what Tony did last Sunday. He

		bought a music CD on that day. And now, the following, something below we have, we have a description of what happened that day. Now the verbs have been changed into the past tense. OK? Now, try to write the base form of the underlined verbs. Now what does it mean by the base form? Go, went, gone - go is the base form. See, saw, seen - see is the base form. Yes, yes. So, number 1 for example, he went shopping at Mongkok, Monday last Sunday. The base form of went is?
18	Students:	Go.
19	Teacher:	Go, yes. So easy for you. Too easy? OK, let's see. Do it now. I give you one minute. So easy. Wow, so easy. Are you sure? Will you make mistakes? So easy. Are you sure? OK. Do it, do it. And let me know. I give you only one minute. Now, don't copy the answer from your classmate. Do it by yourself. Now when we, when we say, we want the base form, it means we don't need to put any -s. Usually we say I go, he goes. But when we use the base form, we don't need to put any -s, at the end of the verb, OK? OK, now, so number 1, went is go -g -o go. Number 2, he got up at 9 o'clock and had a light breakfast. So, xxx, what's your answer? You answer to number 2?
20	Student:	Get.
21	Teacher:	Get. One more.
22	Student:	Have.
23	Teacher:	Have - h-a-v-e OK. Number 3, he took the MTR. Took. So what do we put?
24	Student:	Take.
25	Teacher:	Take. Spell it.
26	Student:	Take. -t -a -k -e
27	Teacher:	T-a-k-e. Very good. You have ... ?
28	Student:	Take.
29	Teacher:	Take. OK, number 4? He walked along the streets near the station and looked for shops he was interested in.
30	Student:	Walk.
31	Teacher:	Walk. W-a-l-k. And the base form for was ... ?
32	Student:	Be.
33	Teacher:	Be, yes, very good. So, number 4. Yes, that is verb-to-be. That is verb-to-be. The base form of was. When you see were, the base form is also be. Correct. OK. Now, number 5?

34	Student:	Be.
35	Teacher:	Be again, and then ...?
36	Student:	Sell.
37	Teacher:	Sell, spell it.
38	Student:	S-e-l-l.
39	Teacher:	Yes, -s -e -double l. Yes. Now, number 6?
40	Student:	Be.
41	Teacher:	Be again, the base form is be. Now, number 7, did not become ... do not. Yes, very good. Yes, really, now, so good. OK, you are as smart as Tony. OK? OK, now you turn to page 2. Turn to the back. Turn to the back. Turn to the back. Do you think it is easy for you again?
42	Students:	No. / Yes.
43	Teacher:	No. OK, I give you also one minute only. Too much time. OK. Do it. Do it, do it. Exercise B, come on, on page 2, come on, do it. ... Yes ... Do Exercise B now on page 2. Come on, come on, [****] Very good. Yes. You want to tell me why. What can I do for you? Yes? Yes? OK, give it back. Don't worry. I will explain. Who has not yet finished? So most of you have finished. OK, take a look. Now number 1, OK. Yes, xxx, any question? Now, number 1, from is, what do we get? Come on, tell me your answer.
44	Students:	Was.
45	Teacher:	Was. OK. From are, we have ...?
46	Students:	Were.
47	Teacher:	Were. From do not ...?
48	Students:	Did not.
49	Teacher:	Did not. From does not ...?
50	Students:	Did not.
51	Teacher:	Also did not. Now, from walk ...?
52	Students:	Walk.
53	Teacher:	Walked. W-a-l-k ...? -ed. Now, in bracket, we have regular verb. 規則的動詞, 規則變化的動詞 [Cantonese which means verbs which are regular, regular verbs] OK, 規則變化 [Cantonese which means regular], we put -ed. Now, for sell, what do we put?
54	Students:	Sold.
55	Teacher:	Sold, s-o-l-d. 不規則變化的動詞 [Cantonese which means irregular verbs] OK, so 現在經常要大家背的 word table 就是

		全部是不規則變化的動詞 [Cantonese which means that type of table that you are now often asked to learn by heart is in fact all about irregular verbs.] OK, yes, OK. Now ... now most verbs ... sh- ... Have you got all correct? Wow, you are so smart. Yes, you let everybody know? The don't know that you are smart. I have to let them know. In their eyes, you are not so smart. They cannot know you. OK, now most verbs can be changed into the past tense form by adding -ed after it, such as the word walk. So we call these verbs regular verbs. So remember, for regular verb, we have -ed. Other verbs like sell are different. We call them irregular verb. Irregular, it means they are not the same every time. OK? They are not the same every time. Go, went, gone. Sell, sold, sold. Their changes are very different. OK, now, eh ... we have one passage here. Oh, this one talk about Gigi. Do we have any Gigi here? We don't have any Gigi. Do you know any Gigi?
56	Students:	No.
57	Teacher:	No, you don't have any friend Gigi?
58	Students:	No.
59	Teacher:	No, OK.
60	Student:	[*****]
61	Teacher:	You have one?
62	Students:	Gigi, Gigi, [*****]
63	Teacher:	Yes?
64	Students:	[*****]
65	Teacher:	OK don't worry. OK, sh- ... OK, [*****] Gigi also went shopping, OK, start reading for us. Let us read. We listen. We look at the passage, OK? Xxx, you start. Last week ...?
66	Student:	Last week he want shopping ...
67	Teacher:	Not want shopping. I am sorry. ... Ah ... went ...
68	Student:	Last week he went shopping ...
69	Teacher:	Festival Walk.
70	Student:	Festival walk. She wanted to buy a present for her brother.
71	Teacher:	Yes, thank you. So, xxx ...?
72	Student:	There were a lot of different shops and a lot of interesting ... things to ...
73	Teacher:	To buy.
74	Student:	She visit a ...
75	Teacher:	She visited.

Appendix 6.1b Sample transcription for interviews (main study)

Teacher B Interview 2

(Total length: Around 29 minutes)

1	Researcher:	Just like last time, the first question is whether you have any special things to say first.
2	Teacher:	Yes, this is to help them ... they should have some concepts from their primary school, past tense. Yes.
3	Researcher:	So you think that the material is too easy for the students?
4	Teacher:	If you say easy, maybe it is easy for most of the students, such as exercise (a), which is not a problem for most of the students. But I intentionally asked them about the base form, in order to test them about their concept of 'to be'.
5	Researcher:	I wasn't that sure about your students, and whether they may feel ...
6	Teacher:	OK, OK. It could encourage them. They knew how to do it from the start. Exercise (b) also appeared easy. This exercise (b), isn't? Have you brought a copy to look at?
7	Researcher:	Yes.
8	Teacher:	Yes. Another thing is, the previous part [he probably meant the following part] became a little confusing for some of the students.
9	Researcher:	Why?
10	Teacher:	When they answered, for example question 3, they couldn't use 'Yes, there were' but they did it in other ways. For this, when I later use the grammar book, I will systematically make use of a series of drilling to help them.
11	Researcher:	Perhaps, perhaps this is not yet covered.
12	Teacher:	Yes, not yet covered. In fact, I have not yet used the grammar book.
13	Researcher:	Was this the first lesson for ...
14	Teacher:	Yes, just started.
15	Researcher:	Just started.
16	Teacher:	Theoretically they should have some concepts. It is good to do it this way. In fact I have considered this. I intentionally did not ask them to refer to the Grammar Book. Then they had to face some problems.

17	Researcher:	Then they knew ...
18	Teacher:	Perhaps some of them only understood partially. Some of them understood. They were some students who were very smart. Some of them. For the minority who did not understand, I will use the Grammar Book tomorrow for a series of drilling. When they fail [to understand], they will pay special attention. For this I think this is what I can do.
19	Researcher:	Yes, for errors, this can help them to pay more attention to particular aspects.
20	Teacher:	Yes, in the past two weeks I have been asking them to recite the table for irregular verbs.
21	Researcher:	I heard that you referred to a test for the table?
22	Teacher:	A short quiz.
23	Researcher:	On things like go, went, gone?
24	Teacher:	Just for 3 minutes, such as ab, cd, ef, gh, ijk, until m. Tomorrow I will mixed all of these up from a to m, and ask them to do it again.
25	Researcher:	So you are doing those irregular verb forms?
26	Teacher:	Yes, yes, because these need to be recited and memorized.
27	Researcher:	Are these the tables at the end of the book?
28	Teacher:	Yes, they are there in the book, at the end of the book. They have to memorize them. They have done from a to m.
29	Researcher:	Yes, that's why they did not have problems with part (a).
30	Teacher:	Yes, they already know these.
31	Researcher:	Only the following parts are comparatively ...
32	Teacher:	They have general concepts. We haven't yet done 'spent'. That's why a student made a mistake.
33	Researcher:	Inn fact, he/she could have found the word since it has been given in the passage.
34	Teacher:	Yes, but he/she was not smart enough. Ha! He/She just answered off-hand. Perhaps it was a careless mistakes, perhaps. Basically, I think it was generally OK. And also this ... you call context, was also connected to the chapter they were doing, and not something unfamiliar.
35	Researcher:	The version of my textbook is different from yours. This is the 2004 edition.
36	Teacher:	2004 is the right one.
37	Researcher:	So it is the 2004 version, the 2004 edition? Just now you referred to page 47, but I found my version was different

		from the students’.
38	Teacher:	Ah, yours may be the old version.
39	Researcher:	Mine is 2000 ... Could yours be 2001? Or yours was 2004. Just now I tried to turn to the page you referred to. But I found that it was different. But maybe I copied the wrong page.
40	Teacher:	This is 47. [Both Teacher and Researcher compared the pages together.]
41	Researcher:	47, yes. I found the students, ... It’s really different. Let me look at the information. [She meant the page for the publishing information.] I may have browsed though this. It seemed to be 2000 ... Then perhaps I have copied the wrong version, since I have ...
42	Teacher:	I think you have copied the old edition.
43	Researcher:	Yes, this is perhaps the 2001 version, or the 2002 version.
44	Teacher:	The old edition. Yes.
45	Researcher:	In your version, you have more material for grammar. Yours is Target?
46	Teacher:	Yes, it is Target. Yes, there is more material ... In fact the material is quite rich.
47	Researcher:	Yes, but the version I saw was quite simple.
48	Teacher:	Yes, Yes.
49	Researcher:	That’s why ... but the general content is quite similar.
50	Teacher:	Yes.
51	Researcher:	And GiGi and Tony are the characters in my version. They aren’t in yours?
52	Teacher:	Tony and Mark.
53	Researcher:	Tony and Mark. Then they are ... maybe slightly ...
54	Teacher:	Tony and Mark. It’s changed, no longer GiGi [Teacher and Researcher laughed].
55	Researcher:	But, these may not be too important.
56	Teacher:	Yes. Yes..
57	Researcher:	Eh ...
58	Teacher:	Here ... one period may not be enough. Because we can’t just check answers with them. We need a little explanation., and you see we want the students to read these. They are in a Chinese medium school. If we don’t give them a chance to speak in class, it will be even harder to make them speak out of class. For me, teaching ...

Simple past tense

[Adapted from Unit 3 of *Longman Target English 1A* (2004)
for the section "Language Focus", p.46-48]

A. Structure

- (a) Read what Tony says about his typical shopping trip on Sunday.

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On Sundays, I usually go shopping at Mongkok. I get up at 9 o'clock and have a light breakfast. Then I take the MTR to the Mongkok station. I walk along the streets near the station and look for shops I am interested in. There are lots of shops which sell CDs, computer games and sports wear. Most of the goods are quite expensive.

This was exactly what Tony did last Sunday. He bought a CD on that day. The following is a description of what happened on that day. The verbs have been changed into the past tense. Write the present tense form of the underlined verbs by in the brackets.

1. He went shopping at Mongkok last Sunday. (_____)
2. He got up at 9 o'clock and had a light breakfast. (_____ , _____)
3. He took the MTR to the Mongkok station. (_____)
4. He walked along the streets near the station and looked for shops he was interested in. (_____ , _____)
5. There were lots of shops which sold CDs, computer games and sports wear. (_____ , _____)
6. Most of the goods were quite expensive. (_____)
7. He did not buy more than two things. He only bought a CD. (_____ , _____)

Appendix 6.2 Sample material used in Lesson 2 of the main study:
Simple past tense

(b) Write the past tense forms of the following verbs.

1. is → _____
2. are → _____
3. do not → _____
4. does not → _____
5. walk → _____ (regular verb)
6. sell → _____ (irregular verb)

Most verbs can be changed into the past tense form by adding -ed after it, such as the verb 'walk'. We call these verbs 'regular verbs'. Other verbs like 'sell' are different. We call them 'irregular verbs'. Do you know why?

B. Practice

Read the following passage and answer the questions in complete sentences.

Last week Gigi went shopping at Festival Walk. She wanted to buy a present for her brother. There were a lot of different shops and a lot of interesting things to buy. She visited a CD shop, a gift shop, a sports shop, and a stationery shop. It was so hard to decide what to buy. At last she went to the food court to have a big meal. Then she spent the whole afternoon on the ice-skating rink. She made up her mind finally. She would never go to Festival Walk to buy a present again.

1. Where did Gigi go shopping last week?
2. Why did Gigi go shopping?
3. Were there a lot of interesting things to buy?
4. How many shops did she visit?
5. Did she have a big meal?
6. Where did she spend the whole afternoon?
7. What did she decide to do finally?

The answers to Questions 3 and 5 are different from the others. How are they different?

You can refer to pages 46 to 48 of your textbook for more examples of different types of sentences in the simple past tense.

C. Production

- (a) Work in pairs. Take turns to ask and answer the following questions about your most recent shopping trip.

Questions

When did you go shopping?
Where did you go?
Were there a lot of things to buy?
How many shops did you visit?
What did you buy?
How much did it cost?
Did you enjoy your shopping trip?

Answers

I went shopping ...
I ...
Yes/No, ...
I visited ...
I bought ...
It ...
Yes/No, ...

- (b) Complete the following description about your partner's shopping trip after your oral practice.

_____ (Your partner's name) went shopping _____.
He/She went to _____. There _____ a lot of things to buy.
He/She visited _____ shops. He/She bought a/an _____. It cost
_____. He/She _____ his/her shopping trip.

